RELIGION AND THE POETIC IMAGINATION: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOUS VISION AND POETIC EXPRESSION IN SCOTLAND FROM THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

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The research and writing of this thesis were undertaken entirely by myself. To the best of my knowledge, all sources have been fully acknowledged.

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Abstract of Thesis

The revival of Scottish letters in the twentieth century has helped re-instate the late Middle Ages as perhaps the most creative period in the history of Scottish literature. This has been accompanied by the recognition of the part played by subsequent historical events, such as the Reformation and the Union of Crowns, in undermining the national culture and therefore in dislocating the cultural tradition. However, the present study springs from the question as to whether this modern response has not itself largely failed to recognize the essential qualities of the pre-Reformation heritage, which is likewise to mis-interpret the true nature of the subsequent loss, and is indeed ultimately a testimony to the fact that on this level, the cultural disjunction still pertains to those who seek its remedy.

Part One of this study, which consists of the first four chapters, seeks to ascertain the true nature of the medieval poetic vision. Chapters I and II are concerned with the poetry of Robert Henryson, as the poet most conscious of its nature. However, Chapters III and IV will illustrate that this same presence is at the heart of the poetry of the other major pre-Reformation poets, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively.

Part Two consists of Chapter V, which seeks to comprehend the nature of the decline which marked the seventeenth century, Chapter VI, which considers the eighteenth century revival, and the manner in which its directions were determined by the earlier cultural disruption, and Chapter VII, which following those directions into the nineteenth century, examines the crisis produced by their confrontation with the modern world.

Part Three contains the last two chapters of the study. Firstly, Chapter VIII attempts a brief survey of European cultural trends in the post-Reformation era, in order to ascertain how far the factors which separate the modern Scot from his medieval past coincide with those which divide him from the general European cultural heritage. Finally, Chapter IX considers the cultural situation in the present time in the light of what has gone before, and seeks to arrive at some general conclusions as to why we are where we are, and in what directions we might now consider moving.

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Introduction

It is now generally recognized that in the course of the twentieth century something extraordinary has occurred in the realm of Scottish literature. Just how extraordinary can best be realized if we consider what the cultural condition of the country might now be had that occurrence, involving as it did a radical rejection of the standards and attitudes prevalent at the turn of the century, failed to take place. Had the decline which by the Victorian age had reached its lowest point continued, there would be little for us now to discuss on the subject of Scottish literature.

It is against this background that the achievements of the movement for cultural revival which emerged in the wake of the Great War must be assessed, and pre-eminently, any such assessment should therefore be voiced in a tone of admiration and of gratitude. The efforts of those who contributed to this revival, resulted, in effect, not only in the rejuvenation of Scottish literature which their own creative statements afforded, but simultaneously in the reclamation of an entire cultural tradition. Without the revival, not only would we lack the consciousness which the work of MacDiarmid and those who came to his assistance excited, but in a very real sense we would likewise remain oblivious to the work of Robert Fergusson, of Alexander Scott and Alexander Montgomerie, of Gavin Douglas, William Dunbar and Robert Henryson. Indeed, beyond literature itself, it might be said that every aspect of Scotland's heritage which is now being studied and laid before a widening public, owes something to the movement for literary revival which was born in the nineteen twenties.

The revival movement was faced with a culture that had grown sterile as a result of its geographical and historical isolation. The essential task of that movement lay therefore in the geographical and/

and historical expansion of the Scottish consciousness. By re-introducing to the culture every aspect of contemporary experience, it sought to re-establish a kinship with the European cultural heritage. Simultaneously, the revival turned our attention to the neglected matter of Scotland's own cultural history, and in particular, to that great creative period at the close of the Middle Ages when Scottish literature had indeed expressed such experience and known such a kinship. The great hope implicit in these efforts, is that a sense of identity might be re-awakened, in that it is the ultimate pre-requisite to the re-emergence of a culture at one with the general European tradition, and with that period of the country's medieval past when such conditions did indeed prevail.

In terms of the background from which the revival movement emerged, much has indeed been done in this direction. The present study has been prompted however by the question as to whether the means employed are not ultimately incommensurate to such an end. The efforts of the revival movement have raised the consciousness of many, but it has to be admitted that many more remain culturally dormant but for the contented acceptance of those popular expressions of Scottish identity - surface where they are not wholly false - against which MacDiarmid and his fellows struggled long. Of course, such enlightenment must initially occur at the individual level. Even here however I suspect that the main weapons in the armoury of the revival movement are not in themselves sufficient to the desired metamorphosis. This is not in any way to denigrate the writers of the movement. On the contrary, it is the very quality of what has been done in the direction which their efforts have taken that raises questions as to the adequacy of that direction in relation to the desired end.

It could in fact be suggested that, for reasons which in the course of this study I will illustrate fully, we are faced with a situation in which the worm is somewhat in the bud. For peculiarly national reasons, by the twentieth century, the essential source of identity from which the achievements of medieval Scotland sprung, and which continues to nurture the European literary tradition, had been so long eradicated from the Scottish consciousness, as to leave those who sought its revival with the task of resurrecting something of which they had no personal conception. Given this, they had little choice but to turn to what might be termed secondary sources. This has seen the re-assertion of the material manifestations - political, sociological, linguistic - of identity. Such efforts are of course well worthwhile, as well as being, as I have said, largely pre-ordained by the situation with which the revival was faced. Secondary factors cannot however lead us to the primary source, for they are confined to the material sphere while that source is of a basically different order. The geographical and historical expansion which marks the efforts of the revival, while remaining within wholly material criteria, are inadequate, if not contrary to the re-discovery of that wholeness of vision, the essence of which is that it exists outwith the realm of geographical space and historical time.

I would suggest in the present study that such a vision maintains the enduring creative statements of mankind, endowing them with its own essential immortality. The resultant literature is a perpetual re-assertion of the furthest extension of what can be conveyed to the human mind, ground regained in fact from the unsayable. By this definition language, and at its most potent the language of the poet, marks at once the limit and the furthest exploration of/

of human comprehension, a boundary and a connection with a level of reality beyond that which human understanding can verify. This is to recognize an extra-material frame of reference, and by virtue of the unique function of language, is to invest the creative writer with a special role in relating material existence to that larger framework. It is in the realization and acceptance of this role that his testimony transcends the particularities of his time and place. This is not to dismiss those particularities, but rather to transfigure them by revealing their true meaning in relation to a context beyond that of their immediate material existence. I believe, and in the following study I hope to illustrate, that such a vision of life is the essential property of the European poetic tradition, including the considerable contribution to that tradition which is to be found in the literature of medieval Scotland. Furthermore, I would suggest that the presence of such a vision is closely related to that sense of identity which in twentieth century Scotland is heroically sought, but which is ultimately precluded by the material means to which, as a result of the peculiarities of the Scottish experience in the post-medieval period, the search is restricted.

I do not expect the vision of existence suggested here to be met with general acceptance. I would suggest however that the centrality of its presence in European literature, including the poetry of medieval Scotland, should be recognized, in that the loss of that vision from the life and literature of post-medieval Scotland, is the factor that fundamentally separates us from both. To this end I have undertaken the present work. In doing so I hope to illustrate the centrality I have suggested, to investigate the reasons for its loss to post-medieval Scotland, and to examine the results of that loss, a/

a loss that has continued to determine the nature of the life and literature of the country to the present day. To begin with, I will seek to convey the essential quality of Scotland's medieval poetic achievement. To do so, I must look first and foremost to the poet who most fully and most consciously expressed the vision upon which his world was based. I refer to Robert Henryson (c. 1420 - c. 1490).

PART ONE

Chapter I:
The Moral Universe in non-Christian and in Christian Terms

Although the late medieval period in which Henryson wrote was one in which the basic tenets of Christianity were far less questioned than they are today, this need not present a barrier between ourselves and a writer of Henryson's perception, provided of course that we for our part are sufficiently critical of the assumptions of our own age. In the present, religious considerations are largely smothered by material concerns. Nothing is disproved however, and such considerations hold as much intellectual interest now as they ever did. Conversely, nothing is proven, and it would be no more possible in an age of faith for the thoughtful man to rest complacently in that faith than for his equivalent in our own era to entirely discount its validity.

For those who consider such matters at any period in time there must be a point at which faith and doubts merge, beyond which, short of mysticism, it is difficult to travel. Men of all eras have nonetheless remained haunted by the vision of a possible harmony both within themselves and in the world around them, the key to which lies in the discovery of some immutable value or principle. Inevitably, they are thwarted, both by their own weakness and through the foibles of the material world. Yet the vision of such an order continues and can never wholly be stifled, and it is in the tension between the vision and the reality that faith and doubts converge. In an age of scientific materialism this remains the problem with which Kafka struggles in his major fiction, and which has been termed "the incommensurability of human and divine law."[1] It is no less, in an age of faith, the problem with which Henryson confronts us in his Orpheus and Eurydice.[2]

The conflict at the heart of Henryson's poem stems from the tension which exists between the actuality of the human condition and the ideal which the introductory stanzas assert. The events of the poem are determined by this disjunction. The ideal is established from the outset:

> The nobilness and gret magnificence
> Off prince or lord quha list to magnify,
> His gret ancestry and lyneall discence
> Suld first extoll, and his genology,
> So that his hart he mycht inclyne thairby
> The mor to vertewe and to worthyness,
> Herand rehers his eldaris gentilness.
>
> It is contrar the lawis of nature
> A gentill man to be degenerate.
> (1-9)

In the poem that follows Orpheus clearly fails to live up to this ideal. His father is Phebus, the god of Reason. His mother is Caliope, the "fyndar of all ermonye" (67) through whom he has been blessed with the "sweit licour of all musike perfyte." (70)[3] His inherited functions as reason and as musician are one in that by both he is empowered to achieve a harmonious relationship with human appetite, a relationship at one with the ideal. As the "moralitas" tells us:

> Bot Orpheus has wone Erudices
> Quhen our desyre with resoun makis pes.
> (571-72)

I would refer the reader to the investigations which Professor MacQueen has made into Orpheus and Eurydice which indicate convincingly and at length that Henryson intended a relationship to be recognized between the cosmology of neo-Platonic theory and the role of Orpheus both as reason and as poet-musician:

> Orpheus is the intellectual soul of the microcosm; the harmony of the spheres is the Platonic soul of the macrocosm.[4]

However the events of the poem bear testimony to the inadequacy of/

of humanity in achieving the harmony which the parallel implies, and the consequent failure of the poet to reflect that harmony.

In practice, both reason and music are silenced by the predominance of Eurydice, whose own function as appetite is clearly indicated:

> Erudices that lady had to name;
> Quhen that scho saw this prince so glorius,
> Her erand to propone scho thocht no schame -
> With wordis sweit and blenkis amorus
> Said: 'Welcome lord and lufe Schir Orpheus!
> In this province ye sall be king and lord.'
> (78-84)

The "province" which Orpheus goes on to accept is that of worldly desire and in doing so, reason is rendered inactive. As a result, appetite is left to exist uncomplemented by the dormant reason, in which condition Eurydice flees from moral virtue (Aristaeus) and embraces sensuality, the serpent sting that takes her to hell.

Such are the clear equations by which Henryson in his "moralitas" translates the "taill" of Orpheus and Eurydice. The moral universe to which the allegory converts the affairs of men with unyielding precision stands in glaring contrast to the confused and confusing actuality in which these affairs are carried out. The disjunction between the events of the "taill" and the values of the "moralitas" is testimony to this. The pessimistic conclusion which the totality suggests is that given the inflexible demands of the ideal, by which alone man can achieve spiritual harmony, the chances of fallen and imperfect man attaining such a harmony are slim indeed.

The stark moral condition with which Orpheus has to comply is that he fully maintain the attributes of his ancestry:

> It is contrair the lawis of nature
> A gentill man to be degenerate.
> (8-9)

However, his forbears are gods where he is not. Such is the spiritual/

spiritual dilemma of humanity in a pre-Christian landscape. The pre-requisite to salvation is a god-like perfection, and no mitigation of this condition is allowed for the fact that it is to be achieved by a flawed creature in a flawed world. It is of course the very variance and imperfection of human affairs that makes the maintenance of enduring ideals so necessary. Henryson recognizes this, and asserts those ideals in his "moralitas". However, in the contrast between the rigidity of its equations and the fallibility of his human figures he conveys in Orpheus and Eurydice the spiritual bleakness of a universe in which the human and the divine remain "incommensurable". Unlike Eurydice, Orpheus is not wholly given over to the things of the world. Indeed, he tries desperately to attain the ideal, so desperately in fact that his story emerges as a testament to the impossibility of the task. As I have suggested, he has much in common with Kafka's K.

In the course of his wanderings, music and therefore reason are rekindled in Orpheus, but only in that he is among the spheres, in the company of the gods, and, in the absence of Eurydice, removed from the temptations of the world. In that he must return to that world, nothing is permanently resolved. His music can temporarily relieve Ixion, Tantalus and Titius, but, although they are not themselves immortal, they belong to the immortal realm of myth. By contrast, he is powerless in the company of those mortal souls whom he meets in hell, and his reunion with Eurydice herself is the ultimate expression of the contradiction which is the human lot under such a moral code. In her presence reason is again confounded, so that the backward look by which the lovers are thwarted, is virtually ensured by their reintroduction. The ideal by which this predicament is imposed is asserted in the "moralitas". However, although it must be/

be maintained, our sympathy is with Orpheus in his lament, in that it is a lament for fallen humanity:

> 'Quhat art thow luf? How sall I the diffyne?
> Bitter and sweit, cruell and merciable,
> Plesand to sum, till uther playnt and pyne,
> Till sum constant, till uther variable!
> Hard is thi law, thi bandis unbrekable;
> Quha servis the, thocht he be never so trewe,
> Perchance sum tyme he sall have caus to rewe.'
> (401-407)

The love described here is human love, of which instability is an innate feature. Venus, the personification of that love, we shall see described in the Testament of Cresseid .[5] In the moral and allegorical world in which both Cresseid and Orpheus and Eurydice have their being, her role is, as the above lines suggest, ambiguous, in that she is the source of earthly joy, but also of sorrow and of mortality. In Orpheus and Eurydice, Henryson's perception of the implications for humanity of such a moral universe is clear. In the face of the illusions that the world presents, the discovery of the right way is all but impossible, the sweetest aspect of existence is also the most damning, and that damnation is administered with unrelenting rigidity. I am here concerned mainly with the philosophical content of the poems, but in discussing these matters, it should also become obvious that the literary tradition in which Henryson wrote was equal to expressing them on a highly developed stylistic level.[6] When we turn to Henryson's Christian poems then, we should realize that they spring from the fine perception, displayed in Orpheus and Eurydice, of the plight of humanity in the moral universe to which Christianity offers a solution.

From that perception comes a vital awareness of the import for humanity of the events which the Christian poems celebrate. Whereas by the morality governing the universe presented in Orpheus and Eurydice/

Eurydice man was condemned for his failure to live up to the ideal, the Christian poems rejoice in the knowledge of the divine intervention through which human imperfection is catered for, and the incommensurability of God and man is resolved. In Orpheus and Eurydice the agent which virtually ensured man's perdition was the inconstancy of human love. The new concept that Christianity introduces is the perfectly altruistic and constant love which the person of Christ embodies. Through its saving properties, world and spirit are rendered commensurate. It is this profound revision of the moral universe that Henryson now proclaims.

The scene set initially in "The Bludy Serk"[7] depicts a world subjected to the same sort of rigid and from a human point of view oppressive law, as that with which Orpheus was faced. The "gyane" Lucifer roams unchecked, and his capture of the princess, "manis saule" (99) is thus as inevitable as the backward glance of Orpheus:

> Their wes nane that he ourtuk,
> In rycht or yit in wrang,
> Bot all in-schondir he thame schuke -
> The gyane wes so strang.
>
> (29-32)

As in the world of Orpheus then, right or wrong man's most likely destination is hell. This situation is redeemed by the intercession of the knight who is, in the language of the "moralitas":

> .... Chryst that deit on tre
> And coft out synnis deir.
>
> (101-102)

As a consequence of His action, "For luve of the lady clear" (47) the "gyane" Lucifer is cast down, not in the company of those whom he had "ourtuk" but "Allane withouttin feir" (54). Thus, by the terms of the new dispensation here inaugurated, the backward glance of Orpheus is not so much prevented as forgiven. Henryson juxtaposes the essence of Christianity with pre-Christian morality in such a way as to/

to convince us of the immensity of the concept that has been introduced. The love of Christ contrasts with and transcends the love that Orpheus lamented. It is not based upon the self, variable, and therefore temporal and tied to mortality. Rather, in its selflessness it is invariable and therefore redeeming and immortal.[8] "The Bludy Serk" does more than allegorize Christian dogma. Instead, it causes the central events of the Christian story to rise out of the landscape which it comes to renew. The formal division of the poem into "taill" and "moralitas" far from being simply a pious convention, is in fact a highly positive device through which the response of any sympathetic reading of the poem must be heightened. The essence of the mistake which the modern often makes in the face of this device, is to consider the two parts in isolation. Indeed this is itself the source of assumed aridity of the "moralitas" which invariably results. Such an interpretation seems perverse even in the face of the obvious fact that the reader arrives at the "moralitas" only after he has digested the "taill". The mutual influence of the two parts upon each other is therefore intended and for all but the most unsympathetic reader, inevitable. For the medieval reader, more alert to such significances[9] the veiled allusions to the basic features of the Christian cosmos, later to be verified by the "moralitas" would slowly gather force in the "taill". The impregnation of the "taill" by the values of the "moralitas" itself parallels the redemption of that world which the former portrays initially, by the dispensation made explicit in the latter. The gradual manner in which this is revealed serves to renew in the reader his comprehension of the great import of these events. Thus the interest of the "taill" is greatly enhanced by the presence of the "moralitas" just as the truths of the "moralitas" are renewed by their imaginative presentation in the "taill". In effect, the formal separation of the two makes for their more subtle/

subtle inter-penetration. Here again we have an example of the fact that the medium of Scottish medieval poetry was equal to the message. As to Henryson's personal mastery of that medium, I would refer the reader to a paper which was written for the precise purpose of stressing Henryson's indebtedness to his sources, as an indication of the extent of his originality.[10] "The Bludy Serk" does not simply reiterate the Christian story. It seeks with considerable success to renew an awareness of its import for humanity in imaginative terms. As Edward C Schweitzer correctly put it:

> More that a moralizing tale, "The Bludy Serk" is thus a poem deliberately simple but finely controlled, its Christian moral made to seem not so much imposed as discovered.[11]

Unfortunately, such a sympathetic response is exceptional among modern critics who more often assume that they are dealing with the dead wood of medieval dogma.[12]

"The Annunciation"[13] is regularly the victim of a similar fate and with even less justification. For example, in two of the most recent major surveys of Scottish literature, those produced by Kurt Wittig[14] and by Maurice Lindsay[15] the poem is completely ignored. This does great injustice to a fine, intellectually imaginative exposition of what is, after all:

> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time.[16]

with all that it implied and continues to imply for humanity. The transcendent power of the love with which Christ is synonymous is announced in the opening lines of the poem. Metrically, and in terms of content, these lines stand distinct. The effect is to convey the permanence of the divine love which itself exists beyond the realm of time. The lines have the effect of a sort of prologue in Heaven, preparing us for the manifestation of that love in the temporal world/

world which is to follow:

> Forcy as deith is likand lufe,
> Throuch quhome al bittir (suet is);
> Nothing is hard, as Writ can pruf,
> Till him in lufe that letis;
> Luf us fra barret betis;
>
> (1-5)

It is in the light of these lines that we are to consider the meeting between Gabriel and Mary, the essence of which is the impregnation of the temporal by the eternal. The contemplation of this meeting is enclosed within the opening prologue and the epilogue (30-36) which concludes the third stanza. This serves to convey the awesome uniqueness of the instant in which the temporal is invested with the permanent. The second half of the poem will consider the implications of this instant upon human history past, present and future. In the first half, we are led to contemplate the Incarnation through which the transformation of history is accomplished. The immediacy with which the Annunciation embraces the wider mystery, has made it a perennial favourite of the artist. One is reminded of the centrality of Henryson's vision within a European imaginative tradition, by the fact that the same century produced, among others, studies of the subject by Fra Angelico (1387-1455)[17] and Fra Filippo Lippi (1406?-1469),[18] as well as the great Annunciation by Henryson's direct contemporary Sandro Botticelli (1444?-1510) which now hangs in Glasgow's main art gallery.

Such visual interpretations of the subject could further serve to enhance our appreciation of Henryson's own response, and of his technical mastery. John Stephens has pointed to the poem as an illustration of what Edwin Muir called Henryson's "extreme compression."[19] Stephens is speaking in particular of the poet's description of the actual meeting between Mary and the angel.[20] As he says, nothing is/

is said of Mary's initial apprehension, or of the episode concerning her cousin, Elizabeth. This compression becomes more direct in the omission of any active response from Mary herself. The effect of all this is to emphasize the essence of the event rather than its announcement. As with Botticelli's painting, our imaginations are drawn towards a comprehension of the still point in time by which time is transformed. This is to recognize the eternal significance of the events which the Annunciation inaugurated. The paradox of the virgin birth is not in itself the central mystery, but rather in that it symbolizes the temporal order's penetration by a power beyond the temporal. Thus, as the meeting between the angel and virgin concludes, an epilogue declares the reconciliationof human and divine which the announcement implies:

> O worthy wirschip singuler,
> To be moder and madyn meir,
> As Cristin faith confidis!
> That borne was of hir sidis,
> Our Maker Goddis Sone so deir,
> Quhilk erd, wattir and hevinnis cleir
> Throw grace and virtu gidis.
>
> (30-36)

The chief effect of the first half of "The Annunciation" is to reveal afresh the absolute singularity of the Incarnation. If this is partly conveyed by the reduction of narrative detail, the result does not diminish the importance of Mary herself. Rather, it is enhanced in that this same emphasis prompts a vivid awareness of her unique relationship with the divine. As a result of that relationship all humanity becomes part of the body of Christ, but in his poem Henryson succeeds in making us conscious of the fact that in Mary, Christ, the reconciliation of all things, was contained in an individual human being. I have pointed out that the narrative account of the Annunciation (6-29) is contained within the eternal context/

context upheld in the prologue and epilogue to the first three stanzas. The form of the presentation thus reflects Mary's own enclosure within her "chaumer" (23), the confinement within her unwounded womb (17) of the Redeemer and her own isolated human awareness of the reconciliation which is in progress. Such terms as "silence held but soundis" (14), "Wox in her chaumer chaist with child" (23) and "blith with barne abidis" (29), contribute further to the mood of containment. In a sense it could be said that Mary is the poem, in that both are the vessels of the same revelation. The structure of the poem certainly indicates that such a synonymity is intended.

This factor continues to control the second half of the poem. There however we are concerned with the events which, as Charles A Hallet has pointed out,[21] "prepare the reader for the metamorphosis of the Virgin from "that mylde" (13) to the merciful intercessory figure who would henceforth mediate between God and man." Contrasting with the confinement of the first three stanzas, the opening of the second half of the poem announces the replenishment of the human spirit which will flow from "luffis ryver" (38) as a result. The body of the fourth stanza is concerned with time past. The ancient paradoxes of the burning bush, Aaron's rod and Gideon's fleece (39-46)[22] are now seen to pre-figure the ultimate paradox of the "moder and madyn" (31) through which the "incommensurability of human and divine" is resolved. The fact that the account of these Old Testament events is related in the present tense, not only emphasizes their significance as 'types' of the Incarnation, it also conveys the resolution and redemption of time past.

This done, the poem returns in the fifth stanza to the present of Mary's confinement. It is re-established in the first two lines. Thereafter, the resolution implicit in the Annunciation merges into/

into a precise account of the explicit manifestation through which the victory of love over death, foreshadowed in the poem's opening statement, is accomplished. Even then, it is only with the Resurrection, celebrated in the last three lines, that the miracle of Redemption is generally recognized. Thus, we are made aware of Mary's continuation as the sole vessel of this knowledge throughout the lift of Christ:

> Hir mervalus haill madynhede
> God in hir bosum bracis,
> And hir divinite fra dreid
> Hir kepit in all casis.
> The hie God of His gracis
> Himself dispisit us to speid,
> And dowtit nocht to dee one-deid:
> He panit for our peacis
> And with his blude us bacis;
> Bot quhen He ras up, as we rede,
> The cherite of His Godhede
> Was plane in every placis.
>
> (49-60)

With the recognition of Redemption, comes the recognition of Mary as the Queen of Heaven, to be hailed throughout time future.

The beauty of the appeal with which "The Annunciation" closes is regularly acknowledged even when the rest of the poem is ignored. A M Kinghorn, for example, although he finds the poem "stereotyped", considers that "the last stanza attains a spontaneity rare among such utterances."[23] I would suggest that the source of this spontaneity lies in the intellectual and imaginative power of all that has gone before. Through that power we have arrived, not at a conventional appeal, in fact not primarily at an appeal at all, but rather at a deeply felt reciprocation of the love which, in the course of the poem, has been profoundly perceived as being the source through which the human condition is redeemed. Essentially the sinner is asking not for a reprieve, but voicing his desire to be made worthy of the great goodness that his meditation has brought him to acknowledge. This he asks through the intercession of Mary the mother of God:/

God:

O lady lele and lusomest,
Thy face moist fair and schene is!
O blosum blithe and bowsomest,
Fra carnale cryme that clene is,
This prayer fra my splene is -
That all my werkis wikkitest
Thow put away, and mak me chaist
Fra Termigant that teyne is,
And fra his cluke that kene is;
And syne till hevin my saule thou haist,
Quhair thi Makar of michtis mast
Is Kyng, and thow thair quene is!
(61-72)

In the poems so far discussed, I have sought to illustrate that Henryson does not simply present us with the fruits of blind faith. In Orpheus and Eurydice, he shows a deep understanding of humanity's dilemma when, left to itself in a world full of illusions, the discovery of the true path is virtually rendered impossible by the fact of human fallibility. Through this awareness comes an ability to perceive and convey the immensity of the solution which Christianity proposes. The intellectual, imaginative and stylistic level on which these perennial questions are considered, is such as to give the poetry a lasting validity. Such questions are always with us. I have indicated for example that the pre-Christian world of Orpheus and Eurydice has many affinities with the vision of Kafka. On the other hand, I have suggested by allusion that the Christian poems seek to comprehend that which, in our own age, T S Eliot has sought to comprehend, and indeed, the comparison could be brought closer to home by reference to the work by Edwin Muir.[24] This is to say that Henryson treats his subject on a level that is of continuing pertinence in any age, be it overtly religious or otherwise.

There is a tendency in a materialistically orientated society such as our own, even while admiring the craftmanship of a poet of Henryson's antiquity, to assume that beyond the immediate interest/

interest of the narrative, the content will be indecipherable and in any case irrelevant. I have sought to show that the adoption of such a stance not only profoundly under-rates the medieval poet, but also deprives the modern reader of the benefits that might accompany the attempt to understand the vision of life upon which the poetry is actually based. Certainly we would enhance our knowledge of the literature and of the age. Beyond that, since the vision of life in question has by no means been proved obsolete, the potential benefits for the modern reader himself are many. If this has not become sufficiently clear through the poetry already discussed, it must surely become so as we turn to The Testament of Cresseid, in which the concepts contained in those poems are not only synthesized, but their meaning converges with a new level of imaginative expression.

For much of the Testament of Cresseid[25] life is ruled by the same inflexible law which was seen to control the world of Orpheus and Eurydice. Moreover, on this occasion the nature of that law is more fully conveyed in the allegorical parliament of the gods contained in Cresseid's dream vision. One result of this device is that it allows for a more genuinely human depiction of Cresseid herself. She is free from the weight of immediate allegorical significance which in Orpheus and Eurydice was not only conveyed by the characters themselves, but was contained only in the totality of the characters. Whether on an immediate human level, or on the allegorical level of her vision, Cresseid in her own person encompasses that totality. While contained within these terms, Cresseid passes from a condition which could be said to correspond to that of Eurydice, that of appetite unrestrained, towards one which parallels the ultimate condition of Orpheus, of human reason re-kindled, but yet confounded by the demands of the prevailing dispensation.

As we come to her in the Testament, Cresseid's condition echoes that of Eurydice. Her desertion of Troilus was a desertion of any restraint upon appetite which is consequently absorbed by sensuality by way of Diomede and ultimately in the "court commoun". In reality, this is the blasphemy for which the gods condemn her in her vision. As Cupid points out before the parliament:

> Thus hir leving unclene and Lecherous
> Scho wald returne on me and my Mother,
> To quhome I schew my grace abone all uther.
> (285-87)

In other words her blasphemy and her sensuality are one and the same. She has debased physical love and therefore its gods. While she remains in this condition her fault is compounded by the fact that she is unable to recognize her own culpability in having actively determined her own fate. Cresseid is therefore guilty in that she indulged appetite - "leving unclene"-through her own free will and further in that she fails to recognize the operation of free will by blaming the gods for her fate:

> 'O fals Cupide is nane to wyte bot thow
> And thy mother, of lufe the blind goddes!
> (134-35)

In doing so she evokes the dream in which she is judged before the assembly of the gods.

As Professor MacQueen has pointed out,[26] this crucial section should not be taken as a strictly chronological episode. It is rather a parallel interpretation of Cresseid's condition, as well as being an exposition of the moral universe in which she has her being. In these terms she is "contrair the Lawis of nature" (Orpheus and Eurydice, 8) unlike Orpheus in his failure to achieve the ideal, but wilfully, in that, like Eurydice, she indulged her debased self. On this level, just as her crime of blasphemy corresponds to her "leving unclene" so/

so the leprosy with which in her vision she is punished for the one, is also the outward expression of her indulgence in the other. The medieval connection between leprosy and venereal disease has been indicated, as has the fact that in physical terms Cresseid's affliction is contracted before her vision of the gods occurs.[27] This is to illustrate the fact that the vision is a parallel and moral interpretation of Cresseid's fate from the time of her desertion of Troilus to her removal to the leper colony. Cresseid's physical affliction is a result of her physical indulgence. In terms of the allegory she is punished for breaking the moral law, but more essentially for her failure to recognize that law, considering her fate not as a consequence of her own behaviour, but as victimization by malevolent powers.

The trial itself does not change her attitude in this. She emerges from it as she entered it, in bitter resentment of these powers:

> Fell is thy Fortoun, wickit is thy weird.
> (412)

However, in the contemplation of her sentence, she gradually forsakes the company of Eurydice for that of Orpheus, from indulged appetite to re-awakened reason. Saturn perhaps indicates such a process as he gives his judgement:

> I change thy mirth into Melancholy,
> Quhilk is the Mother of all pensivenes.
> (316-17)

The process is one that takes her from a final lament for her indulged self:

> Quhair is thy Chalmer wantounlie besene?
> (416)

to the complete universalization of her misery:

> All Welth in Eird, away as Wind it weiris.
> (467)

and/

and ultimately, to an acceptance of the advice of the lipperlady:

> I counsall the mak vertew of ane neid.
> To leir to clap thy clapper to and fro,
> And leve efter the law of lipper leid.
> (478-80)

On her arrival at such a stance:

> Nocht is your famous laud and hie honour
> Bot wind Inflat in uther mennis eiris.
> (462-63)

Cresseid has attained a degree of wisdom akin to that of Orpheus in his final statement:

> 'Now find I weill this proverb trew,' quod he,
> ' "hart is on the hurd and hand is on the sore;" '
> (Orpheus and Eurydice 407-408)

Cresseid's is no longer the personal complaint of thwarted appetite, but rather she now laments, as did Orpheus, the general instability of the human condition by which, under the prevailing moral order they are condemned.

In that she has achieved this level of vision, we are no longer concerned with Cresseid's specific crime, but are rather mourning the general human predicament under the laws of the prevailing dispensation. In the Testament, the nature of that dispensation is examined more fully than it was in Orpheus and Eurydice.

Under this law, a tension exists on two distinct but connected levels. These levels could be termed the individual and the universal. The first of these is in both poems signified by the tendency towards imbalance in the relationship of reason and appetite, between Phebus the god of reason and Venus who as goddess of human love has appetite among her qualities. The theoretically ideal relationship between the two is asserted by Henryson in the 'moralitas' to Orpheus and Eurydice:

> Than orpheus hes wone euridices,
> Quhen our desyre with ressoun makis pess.
> (616-617)

However, as I have suggested in discussing Orpheus and Eurydice, this ideal remains largely beyond the reach of humanity, not only in that, like the heroines of both poems, we are liable to fall into evil, but in that no matter how hard we strive towards perfection, our efforts, like those of Orpheus, are thwarted by the inherent nature of "desyre". That nature is made clear in the description of Venus in the Testament:

> ... cled in ane nyce array,
> The ane half grene, the uther half Sabill black;
> Quhyte hair as gold kemmit and sched abak;
> Bot in hir face semit greit variance,
> Quhyles perfyte treuth, and quhyles Inconstance
>
> Under smyling scho was dissimulait.
> (220-25)

Thus, however sweet reason may be, it is constantly subject to delusion in that it must attempt to make "pess" with a force which is by definition "dissimulait". In both poems, such terms as "fickle", "variance" and "frivilous" are prominent, not only in describing the unrepentant Eurydice or Cresseid, but in relation to the forces to which the striving Orpheus, the pensive Cresseid that emerges from her "complaint" and with them, all humanity, are subject. It may be "contrair the Lawis of nature", but where reason and moral virtue must act in combination with such a dubious power as Venus, degeneration seems inevitable. In that Venus does represent an integral part of human nature, her perfection, the perfection of human love by reason and moral virtue, is the ideal to be attained. But given the inbuilt ambiguity of Venus, we remain, even at best, imperfect and subject therefore to the judgement of the planetary deities. It is in this that the individual tension is linked to the universal.[28]

Under this law, the highest judge to whom we are accountable is Saturn, the god of time and change. The strongest opposition/

opposition to his domination is that of Jupiter his son, as representative of generation. Under such a hierarchy, what can be attained by the individual is severely limited. In non-individual terms, the world will defy time through generation, by the practical workings of Venus, including human desire. In her ambiguity, she exacts a price. By that ambiguity, she thwarts the ideal of perfection, through which the individual could hope to transcend time, by achieving a harmony at one with that of the planets themselves, and like them therefore, immortal. How, therefore, given the nature or Venus, with reason and moral virtue a prey to her dissimulation, can such a goal possibly be reached, and the judgement of Saturn averted?

Such questions are not merely the niceties of ancient philosophy. In that the ultimate judge and gaoler Saturn is also time, and in that we are held subject to him by the workings of Venus, who is also human desire, they remain perennial. Earlier, I mentioned Kafka, who has given voice to a similar dilemma in our own age. By the parallels which it makes with the main narrative, Henryson makes it clear in his prologue that he has a personal awareness of his own subjection to the same forces. In that:

> Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte
> Suld correspond and be equivalent.
> (1-2)

the physical universe underlines, not only the history of Cresseid, but also the predicament of the poet as "ane man of age" (29). Like his heroine, he is oppressed by time and change which, as Saturn:

> Schouris of haill can fra the north discend
> That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend.
> (6-7)

Like her, in conditions in which Venus is ominously in the ascendent over Phebus (11-14), he turns to the goddess he had "traistit" (22), that in recalling his "hecht obedience" (23) she might save him from/

from the onslaught of time, that his:

> ... faidit hart scho wald mak grene.
> (24)

Like Cresseid however he finds himself wholly deserted and Saturn triumphant:

> The froist freisit, the blastis bitterly
> Fra Pole Artick come quhislling loud and schill
> And causit me remufe aganis my will.
> (19-21)

In this, the poet unites with Orpheus, with Cresseid, and with all humanity before and since, in that time causes all of us to remove against our will, while the paradoxical Venus is at once our hope through generation, and our despair in that such is the limit which she sets on hope, undermining as she does by dissimulation, our aspirations towards a higher and immortal perfection.

It is the human predicament, and Henryson quickly accepts it. It is the dilemma that Orpheus recognizes at the close of Orpheus and Eurydice, while the history of Cresseid has been that of her journey towards such a recognition:

> All Welth in Eird, away as Wind it weiris.
> Be war thairfoir, approchis neir the hour.
> (467-68)

However, unlike the equivalent speech of Orpheus this statement comes, not in the final stanza of the poem, but with almost one third of its length remaining. The human intellect has taken us as far as it may, and on reaching this point we are, with Orpheus, with Cresseid and with the aging poet, faced by the last great perplexity. What therefore remains to be said?

For the medieval Christian believer, can be added the bald statement of faith in a miracle beyond his comprehension. Henryson himself celebrated that miracle in such poems as "The Bludy Serk" and "The Annunciation", although showing even then an awareness of/

of the intellectual significance of the events described in relation to the world of Orpheus and of Cresseid. For them, the dilemma had been the irreconcilability of imperfect humanity with the ideal. Christianity brings the two into a harmony by reversing the initiative, in that the ideal deigns to adapt himself to the human in order to conquer death and time on behalf of the race. He recognizes also that the divine element by which this is achieved is a transcendent love which in his poetry is synonymous with Christ. It is not the property of Venus whose form of love, including as it did human desire, was intertwined with self-interest and therefore mortal, on the contrary, it is wholly selfless, and it is as such that its status is immortal.

As I have said, at the point at which the nature of Cresseid can be said to correspond to that of Orpheus, we have gone as far as the human intellect itself can take us in solving the heroine's fate. It is clear therefore that Christian mystery informs the final section.[29] It is Henryson's poetic triumph however and the ultimate mark of his deep comprehension of the import of Christianity, that he does not simply state a religious credo, but rather, imaginatively conveys its implications in human terms.[30] These are that in addition to the inner conflict between reason, moral virtue and Venus, a further transcendent element has been introduced, transcendent, in that by its ability to cover a multitude of sins, it compensates for, or redeems human imperfection, and is therefore beyond the jurisdiction of time.[31] The working of this element is expressed in the charitable act of Troilus:

> For Knichtlie pietie and memoriall
> Of fair Cresseid.
>
> (519-20)

The crucial point to be made in this respect is that:

> ... nevertheless not ane ane uther knew.
> (518)

The considerable lengths to which Henryson goes in stressing this makes the importance which he attaches to it obvious. Had Troilus recognized Cresseid, his action would have been to some extent within the realm of Venus, and would inevitably have included some degree of self. If this had been so, his action could not have proved redemptive. As it is, however, he does not recognize her, his act is therefore selfless, and capable of generating a reaction in Cresseid beyond anything which the time-ridden parliament or its judgement could evoke, and which is therefore beyond its dominion. The backward glance of Orpheus included desire, and thus remained within the jurisdiction of which Venus is a part. The gaze of Troilus includes no such expression of self, and can prompt him to an action, and Cresseid to a reaction, transcending these terms.

During her early history, Cresseid's love of Troilus had been:

> ... in the self fickill and frivolous.
> (552)

being in the service of a power which itself embodied such an attitude:

> ... clam upon the fickill quheill sa hie.
> (550)

Through her subsequent experience, she learnt that the wheel that raises inevitably lowers and warned others that:

> Fortoun is fickill, quhen scho beginnis and steiris.
> (469)

She realized then that Fortune in the shape of Venus, is both dissimulate in her workings, and temporal in her bargains with humanity, that once they have made her sacrifice, her disciples will be handed over to time and death. Then, subsequent to Cresseid's resignation to this conclusion, selfless charity embodied in Troilus intervenes, and profoundly alters her perception of the world.

Its significance, is that it introduces to the fickle and time-subjected world of fortune, an element which is perfectly constant, and in being so, defies the dictates of that world. In perceiving it, Cresseid comes to realize that her personal fault had been her previous failure to perceive it. Thus she is now led to mourn her light treatment of "lawtie" and of "gentilnes" (547) and above all, what she now recognizes in Troilus, the fact that he is "trew" (546 passim). When she was as Eurydice, Cresseid cared nothing for this saving grace. When she became as Orpheus she still knew nothing of it, recognizing only the real nature of dissembling fortune, and its mechanical allegiance to the court of Saturn. The intercession of Troilus supersedes both states.

The former state is cancelled, in that her perception of that which Troilus introduces evokes from Cresseid a repentance which is equally selfless, and therefore like the charity that prompted it, beyond the dictates of time. As such, it overrides the judgement which she suffered by the terms she recognized in the latter state. By analogy, the perception of a permanent truth elicits from Cresseid such an unprecedentedly elevated response that not only is she quit of her sin but, like the woman taken in adultery, she is carried beyond the power of the iron law that would condemn her for it.[32] The imaginative expression of this renewal of the moral universe in human terms, is at once a mark of Henryson's artistic ability, and of his understanding of the implications which Christianity holds for humanity, and it loses none of its validity to the passage of time. The statement "O fals Cresseid and trew Knicht Troylus" which the heroine repeats in the final stanzas, represents the displacement of one view of life by another, juxtaposing in effect an old/

old and new 'testament', and as it is articulated by Cresseid, she herself has evolved from the one dispensation to the other.

This evolution, involves a fundamental re-appraisal of the world in relation to time. Hitherto, we have been faced with a seemingly unbridgeable disjunction between human imperfection and the ideal. The new dispensation does not dispel human imperfection, rather it caters for it. Man is no longer required to achieve perfection by his own efforts, instead his frailty is redeemed by divine intercession in the form of immortal love. It is immortal in being free from self-interest, untainted by that which subjects us to time, a constant as opposed to the variance of Venus, fortune and the world.

Prior to this intercession, these forces had been all powerful, hence the conclusion of Orpheus and of Cresseid as she contemplates her leprosy, that nothing in the world avails, in that all is inconstant and thus the victim of time:

> Be war thairfoir, approchis neir the hour;
> Fortoun is fikkil, quhen scho beginnis and steiris.
> (468-69)

In reply to this, the new factor which enters Cresseid's vocabulary, and reverberates throughout the closing stanzas is "treuth". In the fickle world it remains elusive, but once glimpsed, it enters human cognizance, and its recognition immeasurably alters our conception of man's lot, in that, beyond a foreground of time and change, it imposes a permanent framework. As a result, we need no longer resign ourselves to being fortune's fools. Instead, we are urged in our imperfection to suspect the false and seek the true, to "take gude heid" (561), and "tak thame as ye find" (566), to determine in other words the course of our lives in the knowledge that perfect truth, beyond the influence of fortune, not only exists, but in that we can perceive it, exists within us. This is the essential liberation which the New Testament announces.

Given the redemptive power of this new factor, the impossibility of eradicating human imperfection is no longer cause for despair, but rather its minimization is sufficient cause for hope. Cresseid's personal history has now become but an unexceptional example of the inconsistency of human conduct:[33]

> Becaus I knaw the greit unstabilnes
> Brukkill as glas, into my self I say,
> Traisting in uther als greit unfaithfulnes:
> Als unconstant, and als untrew of fay.
> (569-71)

Thus we are all "degenerate" and the fallen state of man is accepted. But it no longer represents total expulsion and subjection to time and death. No longer, in that degenerate man can embody virtues which not only confound prior concepts of human imperfection, but also, prior concepts of the ideal. The selfless act of Troilus not only surpasses the behaviour of Orpheus or Cresseid, it eclipses anything that the old gods embodied, it goes beyond them, and heralds a new relationship between the human and the divine:

> Strange blessings never in Paradise
> Fall from these beclouded skies.[34]

All that is now required of us, is that we seek as best we can to nourish these blessings:

> Quha findis treuth lat him his Lady ruse.
> (573)

The uttering of these directions in response to the significance which she recognizes in the behaviour of Troilus, is in itself the ultimate testament that Cresseid has herself found truth, and with it redemption.

In Orpheus and Eurydice, Henryson faced the dilemma set by the fallibility of human nature, and the resultant inescapability of time and death. In The Testament of Cresseid, he not only goes on to consider the same dilemma more fully, but also forwards a solution. The image of fallen man is resurrected by Christian teaching, but/

but rather than simply invoke this teaching, Henryson looks to the image of fallen man himself for corroboration, finds it, and in imaginatively conveying it, convinces us of its validity. It is often noted that the Testament is much more human in its presentation than is Orpheus and Eurydice. This should not however be considered a shortcoming in the latter poem. On the contrary, it is a measure of how successfully both reflect the terms of the moral universe with which they respectively deal. The unresolved dichotomy between inflexible allegorical values and human failings in Orpheus and Eurydice, conveys the plight of mankind under the unbending moral law which pervades the poem.[35] In the course of the Testament that law, which in its rigidity is similar to the 'Word' which dominated the Old Testament, is quite literally "made flesh",[36] by the introduction of reconciliatory tones validated by the redemptive message of the New Testament, although expressed in wholly human terms which at once melt the hard lines of the old morality, and of the allegorical idiom by which they were conveyed. The communication of such a fundamental reconciliation in imaginative terms beyond the bare statement of religious teaching, is among the highest literary achievements. It is, for example, in this respect that we could most profitably consider the oft made comparison between the Testament and Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, in which poem, the dichotomy of world and spirit is left unresolved.

The closing stanzas, describing Cresseid's testament, death and burial, may seem a rather sombre conclusion to the reconciliation that I have indicated. This is not really the case. A moral resolution has been achieved, but intellectually and artistically it is necessary to return in conclusion to the stark actuality of Cresseid's history. Nevertheless, that resolution informs her final moments and in doing/

doing so, qualifies her entire history. That entirety, not only as contained in Henryson's poem, but also in the vast chronicle of courtship and chivalry with which Chaucer preceded it, is brilliantly recalled in Cresseid's dying statement:

> 'O Diomeid, thou hes baith broche and belt
> Quhilk Troylus gave me in takning
> Of his trew luf! 37

The contradictions which her history presents are also brilliantly resolved. In this statement, Cresseid translates her new found vision of existence to the events of her life. Her final repentance for having betrayed "trew luf" is rendered more significant by the fact that it recalls the climactic moment in Chaucer's poem when that betrayal is revealed. At the same time this significance is counterbalanced by the fact that, in the context of Henryson's poem, Cresseid has no knowledge of this event. The result is that in her last words she encapsulates her entire guilt, but as it remains for her a matter of private remorse, her guilt is simultaneously resolved by virtue of her selfless, and therefore perfect, contrition. This further overcomes the problem of the fact that the world with which the poem's implicitly Christian resolution has to be integrated is itself pagan. In Christian terms, there are two distinct levels of contrition. The one is imperfect contrition which is partially motivated by fear of damnation, can only remove sin through the Sacrament of Penance, and requires to be perfected by actual penance or in Purgatory. The other is perfect contrition from which springs a spontaneous remorse for our failure to be worthy of the love of Christ. This brings automatic and total absolution. Such a state cannot be maintained in life and its importance is with regard to the state of the soul at the moment of death. In the Testament of Cresseid, I have indicated that "trew luf" is synonymous with the reconciliatory power of Christ.

In her remorse at the moment of death at having failed "trew luf", Cresseid displays a perfect contrition which, even in Christian terms, brings redemption without the aid of the Christian church's offices. Thus, the close of Cresseid's history is in fact a highly successful integration of the pagan and the Christian facets of the poem.

In her meeting with Troilus, Cresseid perceives a permanence beyond the world's variance, a "moment in and out of time",[38] which profoundly reshapes her vision of life. I have already noted the parallels which existed between the heroine in her earlier state of perplexity and the "man of age". It follows that, in reading of her later transformation in "aneuther quair" (61), he in turn must experience such a moment, and must in turn alter his assumptions about his predicament. In his old age he was, like Cresseid, oppressed by time and abandoned by dissimulate Venus. Cresseid is later redeemed by a constant love beyond the terms of Venus and transcending time. The implication is that the aging poet must look to the same source for his salvation, and here, the fact that the poem begins "in middis of the Lent" (5),[39] is crucial.

Just as the setting of a "blasted spring"[40] with which the poem begins reflected the predicament both of the poet, and of Cresseid, so it is appropriate to that period in the life of Christ which the season commemorates. In his ministry, Christ had announced to the world a transcendent love of immortal standing, as opposed to the wholly worldly definition of love which Venus represents, and over which Saturn reigns. In the middle of Lent, Venus as the world, and Saturn as time, are at their most powerful, approaching what appears to be a total triumph when, on Good Friday, the new dispensation which threatens them will be destroyed. But as their apparent dominion over Cresseid only heralds their rout in the poem's/

poem's closing section, so their dominance is for all time ended by the events of Easter Sunday when Christ, his crucifixion having been the ultimate expression of his synonymity with selfless love, displays its immortality in the Resurrection.

So, as the "doolie sessoun" with which the poem begins reflects only part of the "dyte" both of Cresseid and of Lent, the imaginative power with which the former ends, implicitly re-awakens in the "man of age" an awareness of the redemptive power with which the latter ends, reminding him that it admits him to a place in a permanent framework, in terms of which he is but at an interim stage and time's victory is not final. Thus, the history of Cresseid, the prologue which parallels it, and the Christian mystery which informs its final resolution are precisely inter-related, while at one more remove, the accumulated power of the whole poem is laid before the general reader. Once recognized, that power is such as to lose nothing to the passage of time, holding as it does perennial interest for those who, like the poem's author, seek the more fully to comprehend the nature of human existence.

The essence of the poem's conclusion, is the perception of a constant in human nature which sets it against a framework beyond the terms of the material world. However, far from negating the importance of the material world, this is to elevate its significance. In contrast to the incommensurability which divided "taill" and "moralitas" in Orpheus and Eurydice, it is the new relationship between world and spirit which the close of the Testament announces that facilitates Henryson's examination of that relationship in the Moral Fables.

Chapter II:
The Moral Fables: Theory Put into Practice

Section (a)

In the poems discussed so far, I have sought to illustrate the consciousness that governed Henryson's work and that of his age. In the Moral Fables,[1] that consciousness is brought to bear upon the affairs of his material world.[2] The moral terms that apply in the Fables, are those which were seen to emerge in the final section of the Testament of Cresseid. By that morality, humanity in its temporal existence is allotted a positive role in a framework which goes beyond that existence. In Orpheus and Eurydice, and in the earlier part of the Testament, there remained an unbridgeable gap between the actual and the ideal. The extent to which humanity failed to live up to the ideal was precisely the extent of the gap. In some ways, this state of affairs is more akin to what has re-emerged in our secular and materialistic society than it is to Henryson's world. Within such a society, the man who seeks to deal with the totality of his existence, will be forced to face the basic contradiction which Henryson examined in Orpheus and Eurydice. Alternatively, and as is more often the case in our modern world, he may abandon this struggle and give himself over to an existence defined in wholly material terms.

I have already indicated this in the general introduction, and it will be considered more fully as we approach the modern period. The important point to be made at present however, is that the vision that maintained Henryson's world radically differed from this, and that this difference profoundly affected the poetry which that world produced. When in the present chapter therefore, I cite by way of contrast other modern interpretations of that poetry, I do so not/

not gratuitously, but in order to indicate the divergence of vision which can separate the modern critic from the pre-modern poet, and the barrier which this divergence presents against a comprehensive interpretation. An attitude of mind that is essentially secular and materialistic, cannot fully embrace an imaginative vision based upon the inter-relationship of world and spirit. It is my contention that the recognition of this relationship is not only vital to an understanding of the poetry of the period, but also to an understanding of the lessons which that period contains.

The revolutionary amendment which Christianity introduces, and which Henryson's poetry reflects, is the establishment of the means by which the chasm between world and spirit may be spanned. There is no more succinct expression of this than that which Henryson himself employed - the tableau of the Annunciation. At the moment when the divine was conceived in a mortal womb, an inter-relationship was announced between the eternal and the temporal world. The implications for mankind within that world, are those conveyed by Henryson in the closing section of the Testament. There it is seen that man can express on the temporal plane qualities which are of an eternal validity. In this, the unbridgeable gap of the old morality is overcome, in that it has become possible for the temporal and the eternal to achieve accord. However, this is a two-way relationship. Through the adoption of humanity by the divine, the ideal is no longer isolated from the material world. Conversely, however, the establishment of this relationship carries the corollary that the material world cannot be treated in its own terms, but must be considered within the context of the relationship. In the poems already discussed, Henryson's comprehension of the liberating import of the Christian message is clear. When in the Moral Fables he turns to the affairs/

affairs of the material world, he is equally aware of the corollary. That world no longer exists in contradiction of an unattainable ideal, as did the world of Orpheus, but neither can it be considered independently, as is so often the case in our our age. Henryson's role in dealing with the world and the spirit is neither of these, but rather, informed by his perception of a Christian universe, it lies in the reconciliation of the two.

The recognition of the poet's acceptance of such a role is therefore vital to a full understanding of his poetry. In Orpheus and Eurydice, a disjunction existed between man and the ideal. In such Christian poems as "The Annunciation" Henryson acknowledges the source of reconciliation, while in the Testament, Cresseid's ultimate experience symbolizes the fruits of that reconciliation for humanity. In the Moral Fables, that which Cresseid symbolized is brought to bear upon the material world; the temporal is made to relate to the permanent.

Despite the conventionally humble terms in which it is couched:

> In hamelie language and in termis rude
> Me neidis wryte, forquhy of eloquence
> Nor rethorike I never understude.
> (36-38)

the prologue to the Moral Fables, is itself an assertion of the poet's special role:

> In lyke maner as throw the bustious eird
> Swa it be laubourit with grit diligence,
> Springis the flouris and the corne abreird,
> Hailsum and gude to mannis sustenence,
> Sa dois spring ane morall sweit sentence
> Oute of the subtell dyte of poetry,
> To gude purpois quha culd it weill apply.
> (8-14)

First and foremost these lines are evocative of Christ, the sower of the good seed.[3] Beyond this they allot to the poet the role of ploughman, through whose 'labour' the good seed continues to flourish,/

flourish, and the affairs of the world are recognized in the full significance of their relationship to the eternal.[4] The poet is described as arbitrator between the temporal and the permanent, and the fable form itself is a stylistic expression of just such a function. Within the individual fable the "taill" exemplifies the fact that in the material world we are liable to lose all sight of the eternal context in the welter of material concerns and natural impulses. As Henryson puts it:

> How mony men in operatioun
> Ar like to beistis in conditioun.
> (48-49)

In the "moralitas" the affairs of the world are made to relate to that context. The two parts do not, however, present a dichotomy such as that which Orpheus and Eurydice embodies, and to assume that they do, as some critics have,[5] is to misinterpret the poems in a way which must greatly diminish their total effect.

By the Christian morality which the Fables assume, human imperfection need not exclude salvation, in that man's ability in his life to perceive and reflect values which extend beyond the materal world is established. In such a world, neither nature nor spirit can live in isolation the one from the other. Thus, whether we are speaking of humanity at large, or of its primary unit, the individual human consciousness, the natural and the spiritual poles, which the "taill" and the "moralitas" represent must needs co-exist, and the actuality of human life is the ebb and flow between the two. So too, as world and spirit intermingle in the human life, "taill" and "moralitas" are inseparably intertwined. Christian morality acknowledges the dual existence of these two forces, and the extent of its demands on man, is that we ensure that it is the spiritual,/

spiritual, and not the natural that is in control. The Fables reflect the life of man in a manner which seeks to ensure just this. Thus, Denton Fox is correct when he insists that each fable must be regarded as a whole.[6] The fable form mirrors precisely the kaleidoscope of the human consciousness, ever wavering between mortal depth and immortal heights, and it suffers no less from dissection.

Therefore, an adequate reaction to the individual fable depends upon our considering it in its totality, so that the complex interaction between world and spirit, as reflected in the "taill" and the "moralitas", may have its effect. Similarly, in the Moral Fables as a whole, the ebb and flow between these poles is considered from a wide variety of standpoints. The emphasis differs with each fable, but in the interests of clarity I will deal with them in terms of three loose groupings, corresponding to three discernible categories. Basically, these are, firstly, those fables with an emphasis on the affairs of the material world, secondly, those in which such affairs are balanced by the consideration of their spiritual value and, thirdly, those which are primarily concerned with a spiritual definition of man's lot.

The first of these groups comprises: The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Fox; The Taill how the Foxe maid his Confessioun to Freir Wolf Waitskaith; The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous and the Burges Mous; The Taill of the Wolf that gat the Nek-hering throw the wrinkis of the Fox that begylit the Cadgear; The Taill of the Fox that begylit the Wolf in the Schaddow of the Mone. These fables concentrate largely on the human foibles of various individuals, and it is in the poems of this section that character emerges most fully, which is/

is indicated by the fact that the "taills" themselves are of such length and interest as almost to swallow up the short "moralitas" with which each concludes. In the second group that I will look at, we move away somewhat from the consideration of the behaviour of individuals. Such behaviour had been treated as foolish rather than evil. Here, however, a comparison of how the world conducts itself, with the spiritual values it should seek to maintain, becomes the more serious consideration of how far these values are facilitated, and to what extent thwarted by the laws which govern the material world. The poems in this group are: The Parliament of the fourfuttit Beistis, haldin be the Lyoun; The Taill of the Lyoun and the Mous; The Taill of the Wolf and the Wedder; The Taill of the Scheip and the Doig; The Taill of the Wolf and the Lamb. These are the most socially involved of the Fables, in that they look to the powers that rule the world to judge whether they do so in the name of nature, or in the name of the spirit. The final group of fables, consisting of The Preiching of the Swallow, The Taill of the Paddok and the Mous and The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp - although I use the last of these as an introduction - is essentially philosophic in approach, contemplating humanity in terms of its spiritual destiny. So it is that in these poems, the actual "taill" is to a large extent immersed in the values of the "moralitas".

This is not however to negate the importance of the "taill" in these poems, nor to suggest that in the group of fables in which the "taill" predominates, the "moralitas" can be ignored. On the contrary, it is to say that in the former case, we must look to the "moralitas" for a full expression of the "taill", while in the latter, we must look to the "taill" for a full expression of the "moralitas",/

"moralitas", and that in all cases, no matter where the emphasis lies, it lies somewhere between the natural and the spiritual, so that an adequate interpretation is dependent on our recognition of the interplay of the two.

To interpret the Moral Fables in a manner which takes no account of this interplay, must result in something less than a full understanding of the poems and of the vision of life which produced them. In the materialistic climate of our own age such misunderstandings normally take the form of a concentration on the "taill", particularly with regard to any social references which it might contain, while the "moralitas" is either wholly ignored, or is discounted as being an archaic religious afterthought. Even in those fables in which the "taill" is uppermost, the exclusion of the "moralitas" invariably diminishes their total effect, and where the emphasis of the fable is more spiritual, the result is complete misinterpretation. It is my intention therefore to consider the Fables, of whatever category, in terms of the complete framework in which Henryson placed them. What emerges from such an interpretation is a work more complex and profound than that which a wholly materialistic reading can discover, revealing an alternative view of existence to that which such criticism imposes, and one which remains pertinent to human life and therefore worthy of consideration. With regard to this, before discussing the Fables in terms of the groupings which I have indicated, it may be useful to exemplify this view of existence, and the inadequacy of a materialistic interpretation in dealing with it.

It is almost as though Henryson wishes to ensure that the frame of reference within which the Moral Fables are to be understood is recognized, by beginning, in The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp. with what is virtually a paradigm of that framework.[7] Therefore, the/

the misinterpretation of this paradigm by critics who apply to the Fables the assumptions of a later age is a basic illustration of the insufficiency of such a process. To consider the poems in purely material terms is to ignore the spiritual dimension which the "moralitas" undeniably asserts. Moreover, as that dimension exists, not in isolation but on constant interplay with the material affairs of the "taill", such readings are inadequate, even to a full understanding of these affairs. It is not possible to dismiss the spiritual by dismissing the "moralitas" as the "taill", and the "moralitas" are interdependent.

This is exemplified by Marshall W Stearns' conclusions on The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp.[8] In his opinion, the essence of the fable is a celebration of the cok's "sturdily independent advocacy of the simple way of life", a sentiment which "the poet probably considered fitting and proper". In reading the "taill", the cok's attitude does seem reasonable, and one can recognize the factors that could lead to such a conclusion:

> 'Thow hes na corne, and thairof haif I ned,
> Thy cullour dois bot confort to the sicht,
> And that is not aneuch my wame to feid.
> For wyse men sayis, lukand werkis ar licht.'
> (99-102)

However, the power of the cok's argument, and by extension, the approval of his view by the twentieth century critic, are but proof of the strength of worldly demands, of the fact that:

> ... mony men in operatioun,
> Ar like to beistis in conditioun.
> (48-49)

It is just this which necessitates the "moralitas", the presence of which, in the interests of his materialist interpretation, Stearns has no choice but to ignore. To do so, is not only to miss the subtlety of the fable, but to arrive at a conclusion quite contrary/

contrary to that which was intended.

To consider that the cok's statement:

> For houngrie men may not leve on lukis.
> (104)

is the judgement of "a poor person of character and integrity" on the temptations of the world, is to fail to recognize that the statement is in fact a reversal of another in which we were told that "man shall not live by bread alone",[9] and is therefore itself a submission to those temptations. That this is so, is made clear in the "moralitas". There we are told that the jasp represents "riches that ever sall Indure" (138), by which we might transcend "all vicis and Spirituall enemie" (133). In other words, in rejecting the jasp the cok rejects the key to eternal life, and by choosing to assess worth in natural terms, he chooses to subject himself to those finite terms. In the Christian framework of the Fables, his mistake is not inevitable but self-inflicted.

In the redeemed world the cok is culpable in that the key to the eternal dimension is laid before him, and although he is capable of comprehending its worth, he chooses to reject it in his concern for his immediate material well-being. The sources which make for such blindness are indicated in the description of the "Damisellis" who parallel the cok's attitude. They are said to be "wantoun and Insolent" (71), revealing the twin vices by which the world usurps the authority of the eternal: the seductiveness of sensual concerns, coupled with a pride or insolence whereby we raise these concerns to a position of autonomous worth. It is thus that the "Damisellis" relate to the cok, "Richt cant and crous" (65) whom Stearns hails as being "sturdily independent" but whom, on the contrary, Henryson in his "moralitas" declares to be "ane fule" (142). It does not require a medieval Christianity to recognize the higher validity of/

of Henryson's assessment, to acknowledge the value of the pursuit of wisdom, the search for truth, over a perverse allegiance to mundane material interests. It is certainly ironic that the Moral Fables, the essential feature of which is the statement of just this fact, should so often fall victim to an interpretation which supports the values of "Ignorants that understandis nocht"[10] (149).

Such a condemnation is of course too strong. It is the judgement of the "moralitas", the spiritual end of the spectrum, both of the Fables and of human perception. As the spirit must exist in the world, so the "moralitas" is embedded in the complete fable. The force with which the material world, in the person of the cok, delivers its alternative view of the situation, is Henryson's acknowledgement of its power. Man himself, body and spirit, is the crossroad of these alternatives, and the ambiguity of his situation is both mirrored by the Fables, and reconciled in the marriage of "taill" and "moralitas". Again, Charles Elliott is quite wrong in his opinion that in the Fables "the paths of right and wrong, toward bliss or bale, are clear and distinct", in that he fails to recognize the extent to which Henryson acknowledges this ambiguity, which is in fact the raison d'être of the Fables at their most seriously instructive level.[11]

Elliott is imposing upon the Fables the absolute moral terms of Orpheus and Eurydice. The Christian morality upon which the Fables are in fact based, emerged for no other reason than to answer and supplant such a code. It does so in that it recognizes and caters for the relative terms by which, in the material world, good and evil, time and eternity, "taill" and "moralitas", are understood, and that in such a context they must, of necessity, co-exist. This being so, Christian teaching demands simply that a consciousness of eternal/

eternal significances be maintained. It is this that the Moral Fables seek to ensure, their existence being made necessary by the power of the illusory alternatives which the material world advances. The apparent authority and reason with which the cok represents such alternatives, is in marked contrast to the simple choices which Elliott considers the Moral Fables to embody, and his opinion is surely given sufficient answer by the fact that the illusion is convincing enough to beguile Marshall W Stearns.

Such simplifications as that which Elliott applies, are an indication of the extent to which the modern man has lost any real comprehension of the import which the Christian gospels held for the human condition. Inevitably, this loss will also affect his ability to respond fully to the reflection of this import in medieval poetry, as when in Henryson's Fables, all the vacillations of the human soul have likewise been included. The interesting point is that in re-imposing in his interpretation of the Fables, the moral universe of Orpheus, Elliott is in some ways reflecting views which re-emerged after the disappearance of the world as Henryson knew it. As has been indicated, these matters will be discussed in a later chapter. For the present it is clear that such views provide an inadequate exposition of Henryson's world and of the poetry it produced. In another direction Stearns' concentration on all that is compatible with a materialistic interpretation is also indicative of later assumptions, which themselves spring from that re-emergence, and must clearly result in misinterpretation on the most fundamental level.

Such methods are both too simple and too narrow to embrace the fullness of the Moral Fables, which we would do well to consider in the light of the paradigm which The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp provides. In this context, man exists in the convergence of the/

the natural and the spiritual, the concrete demands of the former tending to smother our conception of the latter. A balance can be achieved however if we continue to relate our material life to its spiritual dimension, and this can be done, in a redeemed world, simply by reviving the will to do so. It is exactly this that the Moral Fables seek to expostulate:

> Ga seik the jasp quha will, for thair it lay. (161)

It is with regard to such a context and such a purpose that we must consider the Fables, if we hope to do justice to their subtlety and variety, as well as to comprehend the fullness of their import. It is therefore with regard to such terms that we must consider the Moral Fables, in each of the categories which I have suggested.

Section (b)

The first of the categories with which I will deal is that containing those fables which are most fully given over to the delight of the "taill" itself and the characters which it presents. It is in these fables that the latter part of Henryson's intention:

> Amangis ernist to ming ane merie sport. (20)

is most prominent. It is hardly necessary to remind anyone who has read the Fables of the vigour with which such characters as the two mice, Chantecleir and his wives, and that ultimate natural, the fox, are portrayed. Such matters are dealt with wherever the Fables are discussed,[12] and it is my present purpose to relate these "taills" to their position in the fable as a whole.

Given that here the emphasis is on the "taill" rather than the "moralitas", a materialistic reading of the fables in this group seems less inadequate than when applied to those fables in which the "moralitas", or spiritual factor is more prominent. In terms of our/

our paradigm, we are here concerned, not so much with those matters to which the jasp is the key, but with the nature of the cok, and the implications of his adherence to the terms of the natural world. Even in these fables however a materialistic interpretation remains capable of dealing only on the most surface of levels. Thus, for example, Stearns can draw an obvious lesson from The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous and the Burges Mous:

> Blissed be sempill lyfe withoutin dreid;
> Blissed be sober feist in quietie;
> (373-74)

He comes to this conclusion however by way of his admiration of the "sturdy peasant", that is by applying those values which led him to totally misread The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp:

> The Cock is a poor person of character and integrity. In the tale of the "Twa Myis", Henryson's sympathetic attitude toward the impoverished peasant becomes more evident in his characterization of the "rural mous".[13]

Thus, Stearns considers the blessing contained in the lines quoted, not as the recognition of a way of life which will facilitate discovery of the jasp, but on the contrary, as an echo of those sentiments voiced by the cok.

The fact is of course that a materialistic interpretation is incapable of recognizing the eternal dimension which the jasp introduces, "riches that ever sall Indure"(138). If, in application to the affairs of the "twa myis" such an interpretation is in less blatant conflict with the values of the "moralitas" than was the case in the previous fable, this is largely fortuitous. It is the case by virtue of the fact that here we are concerned more with the nature of "eirthly joy" (395), and the correct mode of conduct in the material world, "in this cuntrie" (379). However, an interpretation of the Fables based on the appreciation of a poor but proud peasantry remains/

remains a most inadequate response even to the poems in the present category. Such a reading takes no account of the fact that even where the "taill" occupies the foreground, the wider context which the "moralitas" represents, of which the jasp was a symbol, remains the true source of the conclusions to which these fables come.

The conclusion of The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous and the Burges Mous, far from being a reiteration of the opinions of the cok, is a recognition of the conditions by which we should live in order to facilitate our perception of the jasp. I have noted that these poems concentrate to a large extent on the "taill"; indeed none of the fables in this group has a "moralitas" of more than four stanzas. Put in terms of the framework which The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp illustrated, they are concerned with those who see the world as did the cok, and with the consequences accompanying the wholly material standards by which they live. However, the consideration of these consequences is the consideration of a choice, made, by implication, in relation to the dismissed alternative, the rejected jasp. Thus, even in those fables in which the spiritual factor is least prominent, if they are to be truly understood, they must be related, ultimately to this factor.

A full interpretation even of these fables depends therefore on the material events being related to a wider universe. In the Fables, however, that universe is Christian, and recognizing the ambiguity of the human lot in the material world, its demands are not absolute. Thus, particularly with regard to the poems in the present group, dealing as they do with the foibles of the individual characters, few absolute penalties are exacted, but rather the protagonists emerge chastened, and on occasions, enlightened. In the first two fables with which I will deal, enlightenment is certainly the essence of/

of the process.

In The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous and the Burges Mous, we are indeed treated to "a comic contrast between the cheerful country mouse, contented with little and affectionately hospitable, and her self-important critical town sister".[14] But if this is all we consider, if we limit ourselves yet again to an appreciation of what James Kinsley calls "the sturdy, sceptical independence of a Scots peasant woman"[15] there will be much in the fable that we must leave unexplained. We will be left with some discomfort for example, as to why it is she, and not her pretentious sister, that is harried by the spenser and the cat. These events can only be understood in the context of the wider canvas which the "moralitas" represents.

By these terms it can be seen that the country mouse is fortunate in being, by virtue of the simplicity of her existence, open to such frightening experiences. It is through them that her temporary subjection to the influence of her materialistic sister is ended, and a realization of the wider implications of existence, the implications which the "moralitas" maintains, rekindled.

She is fortunate in that she is not smothered by material possessions. She has "na hole to hyde her in" (298), and is thereby capable of recognizing the reality of death: "The Cat cummis" (384). The town mouse on the other hand, is so dependent on the values of the world as to remain totally oblivious to mortality, until such times as it will overtake her. The country mouse's conclusion on her sojourn into the world of material luxury, is that the price that the world exacts for its favours is nothing short of extinction. The animal world exists in a constant present, oblivious to approaching death. If man chooses to give himself over to the values of the natural, living entirely in terms of the material world, he too may/

may achieve, like the town mouse, a level of obliviousness. The price however as for all natural creatures, is that when death comes, as a total stranger, his sovereignty will be absolute and final.

We must not assume, because the language of the fable is everyday, that its concerns are restricted to those 'common sense' matters associated with the 'hamely Scots' of a later age. The essential lesson of the fable is delivered by the country mouse in the line:

> Almichtie God, keip me fra sic ane feist!
> (350)

Here, the material luxury of her sister's "feist" is seen as being synonymous with the "feist" which death, the cat, will make of those who partake, in what amounts to a Faustian contract in miniature.

In contrast to the total neglect of spiritual matters by the revellers in the material banquet:

> Withowtin grace thay wesche and went to meit.
> (268)

this recognition of mortality prompts the re-emergence of immortal considerations: "Almichtie God, keip me" (350). For the country mouse, the fable has been a process of enlightenment. Certainly in this fable, the colour and the comedy are prominent, but it must be recognized if we are to fully understand the poem, that the country mouse's conclusion, that the best way of life in this world is one of:

> Blyithnes in hart, with small possessioun.
> (396)

stems, not from a "sceptical independence", indistinguishable from that of the cok, but from the realization that such is the mode of "eirthly joy" compatible with the values of the jasp, and with the maintenance of a relationship with the eternal, while the cost of the world's vanities is mortality.

The hero of The Taill of Schir Chantecleir and the Foxe,[16] comes/

comes to the same conclusion, having undergone a similar process of enlightenment. Although he is representative of:

> Nyse proud men, woid and vaneglorious.
> (591)

he is nevertheless, like the country mouse, saved, not only in the physical terms of the "taill", but in the spiritual terms of the "moralitas", by the exercise of divinely inspired Reason. Far from being unbending condemnations (which if we accept the opinions of such as Charles Elliott they must be) the fables are, by the very extent of the participants' faults, an expression of the availability of divine mercy. It is more abundant for example than that of Chantecleir's wives, from whom, in the natural order of things, we would expect the most charity, yet whose reaction to his abduction by the fox is summed up thus:

> Prydefull he wes, and joyit off his sin,
> And comptit not for Goddis favour nor feid,
> Bot traistit ay to rax, and sa to rin,
> Quhill at the last his sinnis can him leid
> To schamefull end, and to yone suddand deid.
> Thairfoir it is the verray hand off God
> That causit him be werryit with the Tod.
> (537-42)

But God is more forgiving than Toppok would have Him, and Chantecleir saves himself, "with sum gude Spirit inspyrit" (558) to emerge from his experience, as did the country mouse, a wiser being:

> 'I wes unwyse that winkit at thy will,
> Quhairthrow almaist I loissit had my heid.'
> (579-80)

He is not only saved from his physical predicament, but in a statement which exactly parallels that of the country mouse (350), he comes to the realization that death is the price of a commitment to the world's vanities, which causes him to recognize afresh, and make his appeal to, a power beyond them both:/

both:

> Fair on, fals theif, God keip me fra thy feid.
> (583)

The level of enlightenment on which these last two fables conclude cannot be claimed for the wolf in The Taill of the Wolf that gat the Nekherig throw the wrikis of the Foxe that begylit the Cadgear, or The Taill of the Foxe, that Begylit the Wolf, in the schaddow of the Mone.[17] The wolf's enlightenment is more negative by virtue of the fact that his worldliness is more positive than that of Chantecleir or the country mouse:

> The warld, ye wait, is Stewart to the man,
> Quhilk makis man to haif na mynd of Deid.
> (2010-11)

Here again, the extent of our subjection to the world equates exactly with our blindness to the fact that death, in this case the cadgear, "cummis behind" (2226). Clearly, the wolf's subjection is more absolute than the earlier examples. The mouse and Chantecleir were beguiled by the world in a manner which essentially affected only themselves. The wolf is a positive agent of that world, whose particular vice, greed, is by definition indulged to the direct disadvantage of others. The progress of these two fables is essentially the same. Unlike Chantecleir or the mouse, the wolf is not simply foolish, but by the nature of his sin "ane wickit man" (2247) and an oppressor. In both cases, he seeks to make the "warld" (2210), or the "feind" (2431) in the person of the fox his "Stewart" (2210), and in both cases it is he in reality who is the servant. It cannot be that such a direct reference was not meant partly as an allusion to the Stewart dynasty and to its business methods.[18] In the wider context the term steward is in itself an indication of the relationship between the world and the worldly. The wolf employs the fox to/

to manage his affairs, in the case of the dispute with the husbandman, to keep his accounts, but in both cases it is ultimately the wolf that is managed, and who must, again reminiscent of Faustus, pay his account.

In this, these fables give more pointed expression to what we have already noted in Schir Chantecleir and The Taill of the Uponlandis Mouse and the Burges Mous, namely, that nature and mortality are inseparable, and to embrace the one is to embrace the other. This being so, while a commitment to the world is precisely what obscures all thought to mortality, in death when it comes, we are getting exactly what, by our commitment, we asked for. So it is that in both these fables his "stewart" contrives to deliver to the wolf just what he had demanded. Only once he has achieved his desires does the wolf, on discovering their true nature, realize that it is he in fact who is chattel to the world, and to what consequence. The joke which centres on the wolf's misinterpretation of the term "Nekhering" (2115 passim), in which his greed and his destruction are seen to be one, is a precise illustration of this point. Likewise, in The Taill of the Foxe, that begylit the Wolf in the schaddow of the Mone, the illusory nature of the "Cabok" (2448) provides a further expression of this same truth.

Even for the wolf however, the wages of sin fall short of the ultimate penalty, although only just:

> The wolff wes neir weill dungin to the deid,
> That uneith with his lyfe away he wan -
> For with the bastoun weill brokin wes his heid.
> (2196-98)

He is alive, though, and if he is not positively reformed we leave him, whether as described above, or sunk "to the waist" (2422) in the reality of his "Covetyce" (2448), in circumstances conducive to enlightenment. In the Christian setting of the Moral Fables there remains, where there is life, the possibility of repentance and of forgiveness.

The extent to which this possibility exists is best shown with reference to the most vibrant of all the characters with which the Fables presents us, "The Tod".

In terms of the morality which governs the Fables, the fox is in many ways a special case. He is variously described as the world (2205), temptation (1132), the flatterer (600-601), the fiend (2431), and the morality by which the other characters are judged just does not seem to apply to him as he wanders, seemingly with carte-blanche through the Fables, the true natural. I have spoken of the commitment to the world of other characters as being Faustian. In terms of this analogy the role of the fox is Mephistophelean, by which, as we have seen in the last two fables, he secures from others a contract with the world, as a result of which commitment they are consigned to destruction:

> Richt swa this warld with vane glore for ane quhyle
> Flatteris with folk, as they suld failye never,
> Yit suddandlie men seis it oft dissever;
> With thame that trowis oft to fill the sek,
> Deith cummis behind and nippis thame be the nek.
> (2219-2223)

Given such a role, it is both the ultimate joke, and the ultimate expression of the possibilities of forgiveness, when, in The Taill how the Foxe maid his Confessioun to Frier Wolf Waitskaith, Lowrence sets himself to make his peace with God.

It is often considered that the criticism implied by the loose manner in which the sacrament of Penance is administered, is intended to be the fable's main comment.[19] Certainly, such criticism, particularly in relation to the Friars is present. However, the real significance of the glaring imperfection of the procedure, is in underlining the positive statement which the fable makes.[20] By this I mean that, added to the fact that it is the great worldling himself who is/

is the penitent, the ease with which he receives absolution, in a sacrament suitably modified to accommodate his worldliness, serves to express the extent to which divine mercy provides for human fallibility.

The term of the fast imposed is limited. Lowrence has but to "forbeir flesch untill pasche" (723). Neither are its conditions absolute, in that he is allowed twice in the week:

> To eit puddingis, or laip ane lyttil blude,
> Or heid, or feit, or paynches let me preif,
> In cace I falt no flesche in to my fude.
> (737-29)

Thus it is recognized that "ned may haif na Law" (731). Lowrence is not expected to cease his dealing with the world, but rather to control them. Christianity accepts that man must live in the world, and neither does it expect Lowrence to cease from being a fox. Furthermore, there can be no doubt that the sacrament is genuine and valid, as is made quite clear by the fact that Lowrence leaves his confessor with every intention of fulfilling his penance:

> To fang his fish haillelie wes his intent
> (734)

However, despite the ease with which even he has obtained redemption, Lowrence reverts once more to the unqualified service of nature. In doing so, he renders himself liable to nature's ultimate end in unexpected, and since he has relinquished his connection with anything beyond the natural, absolute extinction.

Lowrence's backsliding provides the fable with a superb comic climax. Seeking to comply with his penance, and forbear flesh meat he re-defines a kid which he has captured by baptising it an honorary creature of the river in which he immerses it:

> 'Ga doun Schir Kid, cum up Schir Salmond agane!'
> (751)

As he relaxes after his feast and admires the ample lines of his stomach, Lowrence muses that only one thing is required to complete the symmetry of the scene:

> To beik his breist and bellie he thocht best;
> And rekleslie he said quhair he did rest,
> Straikand his wame aganis the sonis heit:
> 'Upon this wame set were ane bolt full meit.'
> (757-60)

With that a gamekeeper arrives, and realizing what has happened to his kid takes out his bow:

> The foxe be prikkit fast unto the eird.
> (767)

At this Lowrence departs the world with the memorable lines:

> 'Now,' quod the foxe, 'allace and wellaway!
> Gorrit I am and may na forther gang;
> Me think na man may speik ane word in play,
> Bot nowondayis in ernist it is tane.'
> (768-71)

However, Lowrence's "unprovysit end" (775) also serves the overt "moralitas", "exhortand folk to amend" (777). The lesson that emerges is not one of repentance for fear of damnation, but rather one of "contritioun" (776)[21] in the face of the benignity which we are asked to recognize in a moral universe in which so little is demanded of us, and so much forgiven.

This is equally true of The Taill of the Sone and Air of the foirsaid Foxe, callit Father War. The restrictions imposed on him are no greater than those imposed on his father. He is not punished for his inherent nature, for being a fox, but in that he fails to abide by a specific, and very limited command:

> 'Se neir be twentie mylis quhair I am
> The Kid ga saiflie be the wolf syde,
> The Tod Lowrie luke not to the lam.
> (943-45)

The essential tone of the fables I have referred to in this section is comic. As I have noted, it is in these pieces that the "moralitates" are/

are least prominent, and they are never allowed to overwhelm the comic vigour. Foolish characters such as cock or mouse are not made to pay the price of their foolishness, and even the wolf lives to tell the tale. Only the fox suffers death, and as I have suggested, the fox is a special case. He does not seem to represent, as the other animals do, the confusion of world and spirit which is the condition of fallen man. Rather he is, as his symbolic role in the various "moralitates" suggests, an absolute representation of natural values and worldliness. As such, his death does not interfere overmuch with the comedy, which is rather enhanced by his symbolic significance, in that his ultimate worldly wisdom is seen to be bought at the cost of eternal ignorance, the final expression of which is his "unprovysit end ... without contritioun" (775-76). He who fooled so many others, is himself the victim of the last great joke.

As I have indicated, many studies deal in detail with the comedy of these fables. My present purpose, has been to stress the role in the fable as a whole, of the moral background which is the ultimate source of the comedy,[22] so that the details may be understood the more fully, and misunderstanding avoided. At this point, however, from the history of Father War, we move in The Parliament of fourfuttit Beistis haldin be the Lyoun, into yet another category of fable, that in which society in general is subject to scrutiny.

Section (c)

Plainly, there are many social references in the fables already discussed. The character of the burges mous for example is indicative of the privileges which the increasingly powerful merchant class had gained for themselves:

> The uther Mous, that in the Burgh can byde,
> Was Gild brother and made an fre Burges;
> Toll fre als, but custom mair or les,
> And fredome had to ga quhair ever scho list,
> Amang the cheis in Ark, and meill in kist.
> (171-75)

Similarly, as has been indicated, the conduct of the clergy, more particularly of the Friars, is criticised in the character of Freir Wolf Waitskaith. These are however, incidental aspects of the poems, the fundamentally comic nature of which, stems from a recognition of the foolishness of the behaviour of the protagonists, when seen in relation to real moral values. When these values are held against the standards by which humanity governs its affairs, the comedy is to a large extent replaced by social criticism. Such is the case in the fables I will now discuss. The central concern of these fables is the nature of the structures and institutions which direct human society. Whereas in the previous section, I sought to illustrate the moral background so that the comedy might be more fully understood, I will now seek to relate the social fables to this same moral source, so that we may recognize the true import of the criticisms which they make.

I have included in this group of fables The Taill of the Wolf and the Wedder.[23] Although the fable may contain references to actual conditions in the court of James III, these are not the main reasons for its inclusion.[24] Rather, it is appropriate to this section in that it presents in fundamental terms the conditions which are at the heart of the social ills demonstrated throughout this/

this group. On a simple level this refers to the assumption of authority by those who either do not have the ability, or do not have the will, to carry out the task with which they have been entrusted. In the society of the pasture, the Wedder assumes the trappings of the dog, a role which he is incapable of fulfilling. The lesson is supplied by the "moralitas":

> Thairfoir I counsell men of everilk stait
> To knaw thame self, and quhome they suld forbeir.[25]
> (2609-10)

On closer examination, however, the Wedder's fault must be regarded as more complex than this. The judgement of the "moralitas" is not a condemnation of the Wedder's adoption of the dog's skin, but rather of his assumption that by doing so, he has adopted the dog's spirit. It must be remembered that, not only was the purpose of the ploy commendable, that is the protection of the sheep, but it was also successful:

> Was nowther Wolff, Wildcat, nor yit Tod
> Durst cum within thay boundis all about.
> (2504-2505)

The Wedder is confounded only when he loses sight of the fact that his authority is conferred and not innate. This mistake occurs when he comes to consider his new found power an end in itself, forgetting the purpose, the protection of the flock, for which it was bestowed:

> 'Na' quod the Wedder, 'in Faith we part not swa:
> It is not the Lamb, bot the, that I desyre.'
> (2534-35)

In the fables that deal with the nature of kingship, the lesson is essentially the same, not simply a criticism of inadequacy, but again, a condemnation of the assumption that conferred authority is innate. The power of the king is God-given, and his rule is legitimate where he governs in accordance with the will of the God from whom he holds his power. To fail in this purpose, not only renders/

renders the ruler accountable for the fate of his 'flock', but brings against him the awesome charge of declaring an autonomous power which usurps the law of God, just as the Wedder, rather than humbly accepting the dog's responsibility, usurped his authority. As with the Wedder, sooner or later death appears to destroy the pretence and, as the Wedder lost the protection of an authority beyond that of the wolf, that is the conferred trappings of the dog, so the earthly power which declares itself autonomous, loses all right of appeal to an authority beyond its own. With the coming of death, that power is seen to be illusory.

The Parliament of fourfuttit Beistis, haldin be the Lyoun describes a society based entirely on the natural. Given the structure of this society, at the pinnacle of which sits an all-powerful ruler who dictates its values, the expression of the society is centred on the king. In the "moralitas" of the fable we are told that:

> The Lyoun is the warld be liklynace,
> To quhom loutis baith Empriour and King.
> (1104-1105)

By this description he respresents both the world and, since he enjoys the worship of the kings of the earth, the ultimate wordly ruler. Thus the parliament describes the composition both of such a king, and of the world as he directs it. It attempts to examine the nature of a society under the absolute sovereignty of the supreme natural man who has declared his independence from any higher authority:

> When opening the parliament the lyoun demands:
>
> Se nane pretend to pryde in my presence.
> (935)

he is in fact declaring his royal prerogative with regard to that vice. That his ambassadors are sensuality and temptation:

> This Wolf I likkin to Sensualitie.
> (1118)

This Tod I likkin to temptations.
(1132)

is a further indication both of his own nature and of the society which he encourages. The ultimate condemnation of his regime, is the total absence from it of the grey mare of spiritual contemplation. It is a world which considers nothing beyond its own terms, ruled, by definition, by a king who believes his own to be the highest authority. This being so, the description of the absent mare amounts to a definition of all that is missing from the existing order:

> The Mere is Men of contemplation,
> Of Pennance Walkand in the wildernes,
> As monkis and othir men of religioun
> That presis god to pleiss in everilk place;
> Abstractit from this warldis wretchitnes,
> In wilfull povertee, fra pomp and all pryde,
> And fra this warld in mynd ar mortyfyde.[26]
> (1111-1117)

The temporal ruler's attempt to subject this dimension to his own authority, an attempt which Henryson had reason to fear and which was soon to convulse society, he regards as a usurpation of divine authority. In such a world no-one, least of all the king, "presis god to pleiss". For a king to rule thus, is for him to forget that power is God-given, to come to believe that he himself is the source of power, just as the Wedder came to believe he was the dog. As with the Wedder, such self-delusion is both time limited, in that death comes to dispel it, and time limiting, in that having refused to acknowledge anything beyond the natural in life, when death comes, as an end to the natural process, we cannot claim an interest in a dimension beyond it.

To rule by such a purely natural authority is to base society upon wholly natural values, and in disregarding spiritual values, is a betrayal of divine trust. To recall our initial paradigm, the/

the demotion of the grey mare, is the equivalent of the rejection of the jasp, of the key to an understanding beyond the natural, by a whole society, through the pride and self-aggrandizement of the temporal power. The cok was but a fool, who by his own obtuseness denied himself such understanding, but the lyoun would make himself god of an autonomous midden. As such, his culpability is infinitely greater. The closing stanza of the "moralitas" is a re-assertion of a higher sovereignty, of which the reign of the temporal monarch has been a denial, but to which he must ultimately give account.

> O mary myld, medeatour of mercy meke,
> Sitt doun before they sone celestiall,
> For us synnaris his celsitude beseke,
> Us to defend fra pane and perellis all,
> And help us up unto thy hevinlie hall,
> In gloir, quhair we may see the face of God. -
> And thus endis the talking of the Tod.[27]
> (1139-45)

It would of course be both indiscreet and impractical for Henryson to be over strident in his analysis of the nature of kingship, although it is quite clear from the description of the parliament that a direct parallel is intended with the Scottish court.[28] Less directly, although more importantly, the society and the ruler which the parliament depicts, reflects both the perennial tendency in every human being away from the spiritual, and towards the natural, and the particular temptations which the world holds for the powerful. The lesson for all in such a society, but in particular for those who, having been given power over it, will be asked to account for it, is that they pay heed to the significance of the grey mare's kick. The "thocht of deid" (1125) implies the thought of judgement, and for a king, not simply in terms of how far he obeyed or disobeyed the divine will, but as to how far he employed for good or ill the very exceptional powers bestowed upon him. It is a theme which is taken/

taken up again in The Taill of the Lyon and the Mous.[29]

The "moralitas" of this fable proclaims even more directly the fact that, in an eternal context, the king himself is but a steward who must give account of his stewardship. This being so, a king:

> Quhilk suld be walkrife gyde and Governour
> Of his pepill, that takis na labour
> To reule and steir the land, and Justice keip.
> (1576-78)

is clearly unprepared for such assessment. To such a one comes the reminder:

> Quha wait how sone ane Lord of grit Renoun,
> Rolland in warldlie lust and vane plesance,
> May be overthrawin.
> (1601-1603)

There can be no doubt that in this fable, as in the others of this group, particular reference to the condition of Scotland in Henryson's time is intended. Such references have been amply dealt with elsewhere.[30] My present purpose is to point out the importance of considering both the fable, and the Fables as a whole.[31] Given the materialistic emphasis of our own age, critical consideration tends to centre on the world of time and place with which the "taill" is involved (although inadequately, of necessity, when treated thus in isolation).[32] Therefore, in practice, my present purpose calls attention to the moral and spiritual background from which the poet's vision of temporal affairs can be said to spring. To re-establish this relationship is to consider the Fables in the light in which Henryson wrote them. It is also to return them to that context which renders them permanently meaningful, in that they are concerned with the fate of humanity on a level beyond time or place.

In the present fable, it is kingship which is assessed in such a context. God has given the ruler special power and special responsibilities.

The line:

> For hurt men wrytis in the Marbill Stane.
> (1611)

is more than a warning to James III or anyone else against human revenge. It is a reminder to the powerful that the abuse of their God-given power is a sin crying out to heaven for vengeance. A king has responsibility as he has authority, beyond his own person. He has an exceptional ability to do good or ill to others, "to the least of these my brethren",[33] and here, Henryson reminds him of the corollary involved. He does so in a negative sense, only in that such is the response which reflects the actuality. However, Henryson does more than this. Men are hurt by unjust rulers, and hurt men must be accounted for. But there is also a positive sense in which a king has exceptional power for good, and this too will be repaid.

We saw in The Testament of Cresseid that the "incommensurability" of God and man, is rendered commensurate by the compensatory power of charity, in that it covers a multitude of sins. In this, the complaint of the captured lyoun is reminiscent of that of the blighted, but as yet unlightened Cresseid:[34]

> 'O lamit Lyoun liggand heir sa law,
> Quhair is the mycht off thy Magnyfycence,
> Off quhome all brutall beist in eird stude aw,
> And dred to luke upon thy Excellence?
> (1531-34)

The source of their salvation is also the same. Charity too is written in marble:

> Now is the Lyoun fre off all danger,
> Lows and delyverit to his libertie,
> Be lytill beistis off ane small power,
> As ye have hard, because he had pietie.
> (1566-69)

Such a lesson could certainly be applied to the conditions which prevailed in the Scottish court at the time, and the parallel is no/

no doubt intentional, but it springs from the recognition of a universal pattern, and a set of values informed by that recognition, more permanent than political or sociological analysis. As in the previous fable, the actions of the powerful of the earth are judged in terms of their relationship to eternal authority. However, by such a judgement, there are crimes more heinous than the foolishness of kings.

The usurpation of divine authority becomes a more conscious crime when it is perpetrated by the law itself, the source from which we would expect impartial justice. The perversion becomes awesome when we realise that it is enforced by the "consistory", or ecclesiastical court, the ultimate quarter from which we would expect the assertion of standards at one with divine law. Such is clearly the case in The Taill of the Scheip and the Doig, "this warld overturnit is" (1307).

All those before whom the sheep is brought are beasts of prey:

> And ye, Schir Wolff, hes bene richt odious
> To me, for with your Tuskis ravenous
> Hes slane full mony kinnismen off mine;
> Thairfoir, as juge suspect, I yow declyne.
> 'And schortlie, of this Court ye memberis all,
> Baith me and myne ar ennemies mortall,
> And ay hes bene, as mony Scheipheird wate;
> (1191-98)

The legality of the sheep's objection must be considered. However, as responsibility for this is of course given to still more of his enemies:

> The Beir, the Brok, the mater tuke on hand
> (1209)

the decision goes against him:

> The Scheip suld pas befoir the Wolff agane
> And end his pley.
> (1226-27)

Brought once more before such a judge, the guiltless sheep is, naturally,/

naturally, found guilty:

> Aganis gude faith, gude law and conscience.
> (1242)

As I have said, the perversion contained in this "taill" is awesome, to an extent which almost defies comment:

> Off this sentence (allace) quhat sall I say,
> Quhilk dampnit hes the selie Innocent,
> And Justifyit the wrangous Jugement.
> (1248-50)

This being so, the force of the "moralitas" comes in a complaint put into the mouth of the sheep. In this complaint, several critics have seen a hint of impatience and disenchantment with the existing order of things:[35]

> 'Lord God, quhy sleipis thow sa lang?'
> (1295)

I do not accept this interpretation. It is yet another example of the endless quest for sturdy, independent, sceptical Scots peasants of the type which seems to have proliferated in the atmosphere of post-Reformation Scotland. No doubt as a result of this, later critics often quite wrongly attach far too much importance to such characteristics in the poetry of a medieval world, which was in fact based on entirely different assumptions. By those assumptions, the features which these critics extoll are of no more than incidental value in a world in which true worth is indicated by accepted, extra-material terms applicable to all mankind.

It must be remembered that the complaint quoted above is voiced, not by the narrator, but by the sheep, the implication being that:

> ... hurt men wrytis in the Marbill Stane.
> (1611)

As with the other victims of usurped power, the sheep's is a cry to heaven for vengeance.[36] Implicit in the cry:

> 'Lord God, quhy sleipis thow sa lang?'
> (1295)

is/

is the fact that God will most assuredly awake, and when he does, it is difficult to think of any human iniquity which will stand more condemned than the usurpation of divine authority for the very purpose of defying divine authority and its justice:

> In hope that present lyfe suld ever lest;
> Bot all begylit, thay will in schort tyme end,
> And efter deith to lestand panis wend.
> (1262-64)

The closing stanza is an assurance to the oppressed that there will be compensation in full. Even more pointed, in relation to the whole fable, is the converse assurance, the implied lot of the oppressor, especially those who have oppressed in the name of God:

> Thow tholis this evin for our grit offence,
> Thow sendis us troubill, and plaigis soir,
> As hunger, derth, grit weir, or Pestilence;
> Bot few amendis now thair lyfe thairfoir.
> We pure pepill as now may do no moir
> Bot pray to the, sen that we are opprest
> In to this eirth, grant us in hevin gude rest.
> (1314-20)

The fable that most comprehensively condemns the abuse of God-given power is The Taill of the Wolf and the Lamb. In this fable, the lamb calls to his defence the entire weight of physical, human and divine law, only to have them rejected out of hand by the wolf. In as much as he is, in terms of the "taill" itself, a wolf pure and simple, he is but a natural upholding natural law. Beyond this, in the totality of the fable, he represents the various facets of society that hold power by one authority, that is divine providence, but wield it by another which is the natural law of the wolf. The wolf's rejection of the lamb's pleas illustrates the process nicely:

> 'Na' (quhod the Wolff), thow wald Intruse ressoun,
> Quhair wrang and reif suld dwell in propertie.
> That is ane poynt of oppen fals tressoun,
> For to gar reuth remane with crueltie.
> (2693-96)

To reject the introduction of "reuth" and reason to the natural world/

world is in essence to reject Christianity. Having done so, how can we possibly employ its terms to seek mercy for ourselves?

Here, the arguments of the lamb are dismissed, and the dominion of "wrang and reif" proclaimed. There follows the great irony that this is done, and the punishment for the treasonous foisting of physical, human and divine law declared against the lamb, in the name of the 'Agnus Dei' who inaugurated such laws:[37]

> Be goddis wondis, fals tratour, thow sall de.
> (2697)

This gross perversion is central to the present fable as it was to the last. The authority to thwart divine law is ultimately claimed in the name of that law. This distortion, encapsulated in the wolf's oath, is exemplified in society by those powerful groups of which he is a symbol. Thus, the duty of the lawyer is to maintain in human affairs a justice at one with the divine will. It is in the name of doing so that he claims authority:

> Lettand that all wer Gospell that he schawis
> (2117)

In reality however, his function is the very opposite:

> Smoirand the right, garrand the wrang proceid
> (2719)

The purpose of the fable is to remind all such "perverteris" (2715) that:

> ... na thing cruell nor violent,
> May in this warld perpetuallie Indure.
> (2765-66)

This being so, the lawyer is warned that:

> ... God in his Divinite
> The wrang, the richt, of all they werkis wait.
> (2723-34)

Throughout this group of fables, Henryson condemns the powerful in as much as they oppress those over whom they hold authority.

authority. But his condemnations are more than social criticism. In terms of the moral universe which the fable in its entirety assumes, such behaviour is the betrayal of a divine trust, and it is in this light that it stands accused.

So it is that the oppressive merchant class is upbraided thus:

> For Goddis aw, how durst thow ...
> (2739)

while the hereditary nobility, "that hes land be Goddis lane" (2743) should, given their conduct:

> ... be rad for rychteous Goddis blame.
> (2760)

Ultimately, the lesson which the fables in this group holds for those who have usurped and perverted God-given power, is that:

> ... it cryis ane vengeance unto the hevinnis hie
> (2761)

To an exceptional degree, the animals in the present "taill" are representative of absolute types:

> The Wolfis thocht wes all on wickitness;
> The selie Lamb wes meik and Innocent:
> (2624-2625)

The wolf presents the law of nature at its most bestial, intent upon, through "wrang and reif" (2694), the satisfaction of his appetites. In his appeals for mercy, the lamb expresses the various concepts which raise man above the natural world. Ultimately indeed, by his plea for mercy he comes to reflect mercy incarnate, the Lamb of God, in the sense that "in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me"[38] Thus the wolf and the lamb present us with the extremes of the human soul; the animal depth, the spiritual heights. We all have some knowledge of both, and our lives are spent in the ebb and flow between the two. The Fables seek simply to maintain our recognition of this struggle, in the effort to ensure/

ensure that the spiritual is not engulfed by the natural. They are necessitated by the fact that in the material world this is liable to happen. They are a response to the phenomenon by which man, endowed as he is with a spiritual awareness wholly other than the animal, is often seen to use this higher awareness - in that he has knowledge of evil as well as of good - simply to excel on a natural or animal plane.

This is the fundamental concern of all the Moral Fables, the recognition that:

> ... mony men in operatioun,
> Ar like to beistis in conditioun.
> (48-49)

In the first group of fables which we looked at, this was seen to occur on a primary, individual level. In the present group, we have been faced with the more serious expression of the same phenomenon in the conduct of the powerful. It is more serious, in that they are setting up their natural kingdom in defiance of the source from whom they hold power, and doing so to the spiritual detriment of those over whom they hold authority. This is their essential crime. Physical oppression is but the corollary of the absence of spiritual values. Where the natural wolf murders the lamb, the human wolf does something much worse:

> O man! but mercie, quhat is in thy thocht,
> War than ane Wolf, and thow could understand.
> (2735-36)

The true wolf follows nature, but the human wolf is both unnatural and spiritually dead. Where, in following nature, the true wolf murders the lamb, in killing "mercie", the human wolf murders the "Agnus Dei". To do so is to destroy the means by which world and spirit, "taill" and "moralitas" are reconciled. Through his Fables. Henryson seeks to prevent this by maintaining our cognizance of our/

our existence in a redeemed world. The inter-relationship of "taill" and "moralitas" is itself an expression of this reconciliation, and of the vision of life in which the poems have their source. Criticism which dismisses this inter-relationship is not only a misinterpretation of the Fables, but an indication of the subsequent loss of the means of reconciliation which they assume and therefore of the vision of life which they embody. In the fables so far discussed, both the individualistic and the social, I have sought to illustrate the vision afresh, by returning the material world of the "taill" to its proper context in which it must co-exist with the spiritual terms of the "moralitas", the possibility of their reconciliation being realizable through the resurrection of the Lamb.

Section (d)

It only remains to say something of that final group of fables, the dominant tone of which I described as being philosophic. Paradoxically, although they might well be considered the most difficult and involved poems, they need least explanation in that they deal overtly with matters which I have sought to emphasize throughout the Fables, on those occasions in which they were less obviously present. My interpretation of the Moral Fables, has proceeded from the frame of reference initially put forward in The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp, where the worldly terms of the cok in the "taill" are counter-balanced by the spiritual and philosophical terms of the "moralitas". I have stressed the importance of the inter-relationship which this framework presents throughout the Fables, which has in practice consisted of the re-establishment of the values of the "moralitas" in the face of the tendency of our own age, to consider the worldly landscape of the "taill", with little or no reference to the spiritual backdrop/

backdrop against which Henryson himself chose to place it. However, in the case of The Preiching of the Swallow and The Taill of the Paddok and the Mous, such a tendency is, in any event, almost impossible to maintain. It would be difficult to say much about either fable - although on occasion this simply results in little being said[39]- without reference to those moral attitudes which are represented by the "moralitas" throughout the Moral Fables, and which, in these specific fables, very much overshadow the basic material features of the "taill".

Hitherto, I have stressed the presence of the "moralitas" in those fables in which the "taill" itself has attracted all the attention, thus excluding a full interpretation. My intention in this however has not been to foist the philosophical content of the Fables at the expense of the "taill", but on the contrary, to point out that the one must be seen in relation to the other, that the actuality of life which they reflect is in the ebb and flow between the two, and that the ultimate purpose of Henryson's work is their reconciliation. The exposition of this fact, has been the main purpose of the exercise so far. However, if it is undermined by a disregard for the "moralitas" in favour of the "taill", it is hardly less damaged, when this is replaced by a disdain for the "taill" stemming from an obsessive concern for the "moralitas". Both are serious misinterpretations, in that both must ultimately arrive at what is the virtual opposite of reconciliation, that is, confrontation.

I have throughout challenged the former misreading, which in our materially orientated age is the most common. Balanced interpretations of these last philosophic fables already exist.[40] As my purpose has been to stress the unity of the Fables, reflecting as they do a unified vision of existence, and as it is these last fables which,/

which, given their emphasis, facilitate the other misreading, that is where attention is given exclusively to the terms of the "moralitas", it would be pertinent to take the opportunity of considering the equally detrimental effect of such an attitude upon the reconciliation which the Fables in fact seek to effect. Such an interpretation has been expressed by Matthew P McDiarmid.[41]

Mr McDiarmid's intention, to "pursue a poet past the commonplaces and orthodoxies of his time to the personal response that makes him write as he does", is one that makes for a far more searching interpretation than those material readings to which I made reference in earlier chapters. Firstly, it goes beyond the partial definition of the poet which such interpretations produced, that of the "knowing humourist" and the "understanding observer". Secondly, he avoids the mistake which they make, of dismissing the "moralitas" in Henryson's work as "commonplaces and orthodoxies". However, in reacting against a concentration on Henryson's worldly concerns, Mr McDiarmid turns his face entirely to the terms of the "moralitas" which, considered thus in isolation, he interprets as a statement of unalleviated spiritual pessimism. The point to be made is that such an interpretation is not the proper corrective to that of the materialistic critic, but rather the converse of the same mistake.[42]

Henryson sought the difficult reconciliation of the world and the spirit, difficult in that he must deal with many points of divergence. In the face of this divergence both sets of critics have settled for interpretations which lie on either side of it, necessitating the rejection of the other, incompatible side with which, far from being reconciled, it remains ultimately at complete odds. Added to this in both cases is the quest for that which is individualistic, the "personal response", which is in effect a concentration on all/

all that can be construed as revolutionary or prophetical. This further facilitates the confrontation in that it seeks to discover in the poetry occasions in which Henryson heralds the opinions of a later age, that is of an age by which the principle of reconciliation had been abandoned. All told, what emerges, be it social satirist on the one hand, or the poet of a spiritual wasteland on the other, is a picture of Henryson and of his world which differs on the most fundamental level from that sense of, and search for, the oneness of individual and universe which I have suggested throughout is the essential expression of the period, and of the poet.

Thus Mr McDiarmid tells us that:

> In several respects the carefully considered story of Orpheus and Eurydice gives the clearest and most instructive statement of the concepts that governed Henryson's thinking about literature as about life.

In that poem:

> Hell wins finally and reason in the person of Orpheus laments its widowhood. In its intellectual outline the tale is thus a spiritual tragedy.

There is nothing wrong with this as an interpretation of the poem Orpheus and Eurydice itself. It is, however, a pagan world which is described, spiritually, a world more akin to our own than to that of the poet, and it is far from being Henryson's final statement "about literature as about life." Mr McDiarmid is correct in stressing the fact that Henryson is far from being unthinkingly orthodox, but wrong in assuming that this is synonymous with the spiritual pessimism of a later age. In Orpheus and Eurydice it is clear that the poet is profoundly aware of man's near hopeless spiritual condition in a pre-Christian or a non-Christian context, but virtually everything else he wrote seeks to achieve, on a level no less profound, a/

a comprehension of the positive response which Christianity facilitates.

This being so, it is difficult to agree with Mr McDiarmid's interpretation of The Testament of Cresseid in which it is seen merely to parallel the tragedy of Orpheus. As I have illustrated, Cresseid arrives at such a stance with fully one third of the poem remaining. Moreover, far from being superfluous, the concluding section serves as the dramatic climax of the poem, provides a positive reply to what has gone before and, by extension, to the whole spiritual universe in which Orpheus had his being. Similarly, with the Moral Fables, it is misleading to concentrate on the most serious fables, those which I termed philosophic, in isolation from those fables which exist more fully for the sake of the "taill". It is only by so doing that these "moralitas" dominated poems could possibly be read in relation to the mood of Orpheus and Eurydice. Even so, such a reading remains a mistake. For Mr McDiarmid, The Preiching of the Swallow:

> points only to the incapacity for learning,
> incapacity of salvation, the recommended
> prayers in the end of the "Moralitas"
> doing little to lighten this sombre lesson.

This is to put the fable in the landscape of Orpheus and Eurydice. The sentence quoted above is ultimately tantamount to saying that man's destination is Hell. To say so is to declare Christ irrelevant. In fact, Christianity is precisely about the reconciliation of God and man, and so is Henryson's poetry.

Although his approach is very different, and much more searching than that of the materialistic critics, Mr McDiarmid shares a basic feature with them in stressing the individuality of poet and poem, although the identities they construct are of course very different. In the interests of this individuality, the importance of allegory/

allegory in the poetry is to a large extent dismissed. This tendency stems from the fact that by allegory the individual must be seen in terms of the universal with which it relates him. That the form now tends to be rejected as cold convention, is due to the fact that its purpose is no longer generally recognized as being possible, as a result of which it is viewed from the outside, with no natural sympathy for its concerns:

> The allegory is a form which the modern taste finds stilted and unreal because the great story as Chaucer and Henryson knew it is dead.[43]

The great story is essentially the Christian one, whereby the individual and the universal, the "taill" and the "moralitas", are reconciled:

> The virtue of the story while it lasted was that it made everything natural, even tragedy; so that while pity had a place, there was no place for those outcries against life which fill the tragic drama of the next age. The framework and the nature of the story excluded them.[44]

By Mr McDiarmid's interpretation, Henryson's poetry becomes an outcry against life, but this can only be justified when the allegorical content, and its functions, are dismissed. Such content is nonetheless constantly and intentionally present. It is the form the poet uses because its reconciliatory purposes are also his.

Far from being an outcry, The Preiching of the Swallow begins with an act of faith:

> The hei prudence, and wirking mervelous,
> The profound wit off God omnipotent,
> Is sa perfyte, and sa Ingenious,
> Excellent ffar all mannis argument;
> For quhy to him all thing is ay present,
> Rycht as it is, or ony tyme sall be,
> Befoir the sicht off his Divinitie.
> (1622-28)

While the unacceptability of human imperfection was the factor that condemned Orpheus, and also Cresseid while she was ruled by the/

the planets, The Preiching of the Swallow, in going on to accept human frailty, declares its allegiance to a dispensation which over-rules the older law by which they had been judged:

> For God is in his power Infinite,
> And mannis Saull is febill and over small
> Off understanding waik and unperfite,
> To comprehend him that contenis all.
> (1644-47)

Beyond this, far from lamenting this impossibility of learning, and of salvation, the opening half of the "taill" expresses at length just such a possibility:

> Yit nevertheless we may haif knawlegeing
> Off God almychtie, be his Creatouris,
> That he is gude, ffair wyis and bening:
> (1650-52)

The second half of the "taill", concerning the actual "preiching" and the fate of the birds, serves only to underline the importance of our "learning" the lesson which has been put forward in the first half; "For clerkis sayis" and here Henryson is one such clerk:

> ... it is nocht sufficient
> To consider that is befoir thyne Ee;
> Bot prudence is ane inwart Argument,
> That garris ane man prouyde befoir and see
> Quhat gude, quhat evill is liklie to be,
> Off everilk thing at the fynall end,
> And swa ffra perrell the better him defend.
> (1755-61)

As in other fables, the "moralitas" warns against our greed "to gadder gudis temporall" (1918), and is an exhortation referring back to the sermon on the nature of God with which the fable opened, that we seek to know Him, in that by doing so, our souls, "Quhilk Christ full deir hes bocht" (1901), will be saved. That this is possible, that it is indeed the divine intention, is the whole reason for the existence of the poem which is, after all, not the tragedy of the birds, but The Preiching of the Swallow.

Throughout this investigation, I have spoken of my own interpretation of Henryson's poetry, with reference to the social and materialistic readings of such critics as Marshall W Stearns, and to the individualistically spiritual terms which Matthew P McDiarmid employs. I have done so, not simply for the purpose of supplying comparisons, but in that I believe that they demonstrate - the one living in the "taill" oblivious to the "moralitas", the other so immersed in the "moralitas" that every aspect of the "taill", or the world, is seen as a road to damnation - the two basic alternatives that remain when the principle of the reconciliation of world and spirit is abandoned. One last example from Mr McDiarmid might serve to illustrate the nature of the process by which this abandonment occurred, a process with which we will be directly concerned in later chapters.

Mr McDiarmid describes The Taill of the Paddok and the Mous thus:

> Paddok and mouse battling in life's waters only to be snatched by the kite neatly illustrate the warning that death can take soul as well as body, as these two powers maintain their unequal battle. Man, he concludes, against a murderous world in which he is so deeply "with cairis implicate", needs a very "strang castell of faith in Christ". If this pessimistic obsession with the innate and circumstantial obstacles opposing man's will to good, and therefore his salvation, conveys more distress than faith, it is not the first time that an orthodox mind has known a strong tension between accepted doctrine and feeling response. The feeling touches the unfairness of things.

The whole tenor of this passage, and the basis upon which Henryson is assumed to express a "pessimistic obsession", is that the circumstances by which man is almost certainly doomed, exist outwith his control. Thus, the world is "murderous", man is directed towards damnation by "innate and circumstantial obstacles", and Henryson's/

Henryson's poetry is an outcry against "the unfairness of things". It is certainly true that Henryson would react against such a doctrine. It is the doctrine upon which Orpheus and Eurydice was based, but the remainder of his poetry is just such a reaction, precisely because it is not the doctrine which he accepts.

Mr McDiarmid's interpretation would therefore place the whole body of Henryson's poetry within the spiritually bleak landscape of Orpheus and Eurydice. I would submit that, on the contrary, the great bulk of his work is a positive response to that poem, informed by the redemptive import of Christian teaching. In considering the circumstances by which this response - by which world and spirit are reconciled - is abandoned, and a reversion to something akin to the world of Orpheus - in which world and spirit remain in confrontation - takes place, we are considering the great changes which overtook Henryson and his age. One small feature of the passage quoted, might serve to encapsulate this fundamental transformation.

In answer to the multitude of factors which seek the damnation of the human soul, we are urged to make a " strang castell of faith in Christ" (2966-67), a positive reaction which, as Mr McDiarmid indicates, is very difficult to maintain. By the doctrine embodied here, man is placed in spiritual isolation, wholly reliant on his individual faith, and therefore in a state of opposition to the world as external to himself. It is the assumption of such a doctrine that makes possible Mr McDiarmid's whole interpretation, but it is not, indeed it is quite contrary to, what Henryson actually wrote.[45] The version of the fable which contains the exhortation to make a "strang castell/Of faith in Christ", is that found in the Bassandyne print[46] (Edinburgh 1571). In the Bannatyne manuscript[47] (Edinburgh 1568) however, there is an alternative version of the same line which, although copied only/

copied only a few years earlier in time, embodies the very different views of a previous age.

The means of salvation put forward in the earlier manuscript is that we make a "strang castell/Of Gud deidis". Given the doctrinal shifts which took place in the century following Henryson's death, it is obvious which version replaced which. As Protestantism replaced medieval Catholicism, so justification by faith supplanted an emphasis on good works. Thus we can assume that the line urging "gud deidis" pre-dates, and is if not the original, at least infinitely closer to the original than that which replaces it with "faith in Christ". This alteration, although small in itself, indicates a fundamental change of attitude, and superimposes on Henryson's poetry a view of life radically different from his own.

While it is a reliance on "faith in Christ" which makes it possible to understand Mr McDiarmid's sombre reading, a belief in "gud deidis" as the means to salvation is in accordance with a reconciliatory and ultimately optimistic interpretation. Where personal faith may save the individual soul, provided that it can eschew the evil world that would overwhelm it, good works not only achieve personal salvation, but by extension can transform the nature of the material world, thereby reconciling the two. "Gud deidis" is a fittingly mundane expression of how man in the material world, by the exercise of what is in fact charity, can reflect the selfless love of Christ's sacrifice, by which human frailty is redeemed, and man and God, world and spirit, "taill" and "moralitas" are brought into accord. Such is the world as viewed in the light of the Christian gospels, as a result of which, man's proper destination is not Hell but God. The barrier to this proper end lies, not in externals, but in man's rejection of the new dispensation which Christ/

Christ inaugurates. It is only on having made such a choice, on having become, "in operatioun - like to beistis in conditioun" (48-49), that man falls victim to fortune's vagaries, as did the unredeemed Cresseid. Like her, through charity we can transcend its terms.

This is the point that has to be made with regard to Mr McDiarmid's interpretation of The Taill of the Paddok and the Mous and of Henryson's attitude in general. The struggle of soul and body is only "unequal", is only weighted against salvation by "innate and circumstantial obstacles" in these conditions. The reason why in the fable the waters of the world threaten to overcome the soul is in that "heir is no maryner" (2798) in that Christ, the pilot, is absent.[48]

Alternatively, however, as a result of Christ's intercession, we may freely choose to avow our adherence to the principle of redemption which He established. This we may do by imitating Christ in selfless action, and in so doing, we not only rise above the standards and influence of the external and material world, but in that it is a communal principle, we work towards the transformation of that world and its reconciliation with the eternal, by virtue of the propitiatory value of Christian love. In the presence of this love, the waters can be safely navigated.

Henryson recognizes that left to himself man's spiritual struggle against the world is near hopeless. He describes such a situation at length in Orpheus and Eurydice, and in the earlier part of The Testament of Cresseid. The main concern of the Moral Fables is man's tendency to revert to such a state, even in a world in which salvation is freely offered him. It is nonetheless this redeemed world of which he considers himself a part, and which in his poetry, he re-asserts. The spirit of the remainder of Henryson's poetry then is not that which pervades Orpheus and Eurydice, but that which is celebtrated in/

in "The Annunciation", a spirit whereby, through the soul's striving, all things in heaven and on earth can achieve a concord, which the poet through his efforts can reflect. This purpose, the bringing of things material into a proper relationship with things eternal, to which Henryson himself gave the fullest expression, is, I would suggest, the essential feature of the great poetic blossoming which marked the late Middle Ages in Scotland.

With the end of that period, this principle of reconciliation is lost. As Muir put it, "the great story as Henryson and Chaucer knew it is dead". However, we seriously misinterpret the poets of the period if we fail to recognize that it was very much alive when they wrote, and that it supplied them with a view of life, centred on an accepted ideal of perfection, and means of redemption, fundamentally different from that of later history. The revival of Scottish letters in our own century has included a revival of the great medieval poets as a source of inspiration. However, as the vision of life in which their poetry had its own source is long faded, something of a barrier exists between modern criticism and the re-discovery of that source, as I have indicated by reference to various twentieth century interpretations. A partial recognition of Scotland's medieval culture has taken place. However, it is not sufficient simply to admire the quality of the poetry of a former age as a past glory. Nor does the external investigation of that age, extolling the political and linguistic advantages which it possessed, arrive at anything like a true realization of the cultural bequest which it contains. If the poets of the Middle Ages are to inspire, to teach us something which we have forgotten, then we must seek the source of their own inspiration. That, I have sought to show, is in the recognition of an eternal and universal dimension to which it is their task to relate the material world, with the end, in accordance with Christian/

Christian teaching, of reconciling the two. It is in the recognition of such a dimension that the qualities which it maintains are fused into the poetry itself, endowing it with a permanent validity.

The late Middle Ages are rightly hailed in our own time as the oustanding era of Scottish poetry.[49] I have so far tried to illuminate the essential nature of that triumph. It is also generally remarked, that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, an abnormally stark deterioration had taken place. In relation to this, events such as the Reformation, the Union of Crowns and the Union of Parliaments are quite rightly cited. However, as the recognition of the political and linguistic features of the medieval period is insufficient in itself in explaining the essential nature of the period and the poetry, so the examination of material events is inadequate in revealing the process by which these essential properties were lost.

In my interpretation of Henryson's poetry I have sought to convey these properties. By reference to alternative interpretations, I have tried to indicate the main directions that remain open when the principle of reconciliation, which is at the centre of Henryson's work and of his age, is abandoned. In the absence of such a principle, the spirit and the world remain opposed. In Henrysonian terms, the unity of the moral fable is sundered, communication between the "taill" and the "moralitas" is at an end, and we must live by the terms either of the one or of the other. We can maintain a beleaguered spirituality, reliant on a personal faith in Christ and at odds with the world, or, failing under the strain of such a role, we might abandon the "moralitas" entirely, contenting ourselves with an existence wholly in the context of the "taill". With the rejection of the concept of reconciliation, such is the choice that emerges.

The only compromise between these alternatives that remains possible is in the adoption of double standards, a practice which was consequently to become a perennial subject in Scottish literature in the centuries that followed. But such matters will be dealt with fully in a later chapter.

Chapter III:
Fifteenth Century Poetry

It was indicated towards the close of the previous chapter that by the beginning of the seventeenth century the Scottish culture which had found brilliant expression in the medieval period had declined into virtual silence. I have so far sought to express the essential properties of that culture, properties which, subsequent to the silence which overtook it, have seldom been re-acknowledged, far less re-asserted. I have concentrated on the work of Robert Henryson, in that he is the poet who most fully and most consciously expressed the vision of life in which the culture of medieval Scotland had its source. However, before we turn our attention to the nature and effect of the decline that followed, I must make some mention of the many other poets who, in the medieval period, produced major poetry which likewise had its source in that vision of life to which Henryson himself gave the finest expression.

If the vision is less fully or less clearly visible in the poetry which we now discuss than it was in the work of Henryson, this is due to factors both of ability and of temperament. The author of the Kingis Quair for instance, ponders questions akin to those which we find in Henryson, but though his achievement is considerable it rests on a single poem, while the questions raised are translated less successfully to the living world than they are in the work of the greater poet. In another direction, Dunbar, although in some areas perhaps the superior of Henryson, is far less the philosopher, and his genuis is displayed more fully in other fields. In that the consideration of the nature of existence is most profoundly the subject of Henryson's poetry, he suffers the most severely when such considerations are ignored. However, what is/

is considered at length in his work remains the assumption on which all the poetry of the period is based, and is the factor which fundamentally distinguishes the poetry and the period from any later age. Consequently, to dismiss this factor is to severely limit our understanding of the poetry and profoundly diminish its effect. Therefore, I must now give some consideration to this poetry in its proper relation to that vision which Henryson himself pre-eminently conveyed.

Given the practical nature of their subject matter, the early epic poems of Scottish literature do not linger overmuch on philosophical or theological questions. Barbour's Bruce[1] or Hary's Wallace[2] are about the business of the War of Independence and the assertion of Scottish nationhood, and the material affairs of kings and their countries exist to a large extent within, and do not seek beyond the realm of fortune. Thus, of the story he relates to Barbour tells us:

> Lo! quhat falding in fortoune is,
> That quhile apon a man will smyle,
> And prik him syne ane othir quhile!
> In na tyme stabilly can sche stande.
>
> (XIII; 632-35)

Again:

> Bot of this ilk quhelis turnyng
> Kyng Robert suld mak no murnyng;
> For his syde, throu the quhele on hicht,
> Wencust thar fais, wes mekill of mycht.
> For twa contraris, yhe may wit wele,
> Set agane othir on a quhele;
> Quhen ane is hye, the tothir is law,
> And gif it fall that fortoune thraw
> The quheill about, it that on hicht
> Wes ere, (on force) it most doune lycht-
> And it, that wondir lawch were ere,
> Mon lowp on loft in the contrere.
> So fure it of thir kyngis two;
>
> (XIII; 647-59)

By the nature of its subject, the foreground of Barbour's poem, and also that of Hary, exists within such a context. However, a simple romance, concerning the events of the period only, would be,/

be, in terms of content at least, a far lesser poem than the relationship of these events to a universal framework which is the Bruce. This wider context remains very much the background against which the material action of the poem is played out. Ultimately, the fates of the Scots and of the English are accomplished, not so much through human prowess or even fortune, but insofar as they are in accord with or at odds with the Divine Will. It is as a result of this eternal context that the poem achieves, beyond its patriotism, a sort of neutrality of voice which immeasurably increases its stature.

Kurt Wittig notes this feature when he points out that:

> "Barbour's conviction that his cause is also the cause of 'fredome' and 'richt' is the basis of a remarkable quality that can perhaps best be described as "poise": he need not hotly assert his patriotism, but can afford to be objective in judging his enemies"

Furthermore, as he continues:

> "It is essential to grasp the fact that the conviction on which Barbour's poise was based had itself a religious basis"

religious in that:

> "'fredome' and 'richt' are here represented as things that God alone can give".[3]

Free will, "free liking" (231) is bestowed by God, and it is in as much as it is judged from this basis, that its usurpation by the English and re-assertion by the Scots in the Bruce, achieves a universal relevance beyond the material events of the poem.

It is unfortunate that Wittig, having himself indicated the presence of this universal context, a presence which was to be lost in the post-medieval period, should turn aside from conveying its significance, in the perennial cause of establishing that which is individually Scottish in the poem, and prophetic of later historical events. If as I have said the universal context was subsequently/

subsequently lost, then a critical approach which seeks in the poetry of the Middle Ages a foretaste of a world in which the loss has occurred, will clearly run contrary to its re-discovery. The following is an example of such an approach:

> No wonder the Scottish people were later to find the spirit of the Reformation so congenial. For Barbour, no less than Henryson, was evidently expressing the popular attitude; and it may be no accident that the Gaelic proverbs (which were only collected in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but doubtless reflect the attitude of a much earlier period) embody a similar conception: God, just and almighty, is the ruler of destiny, but Christ is little mentioned, and no specifically Christian ideas are expressed.[4]

It would be exceedingly difficult to base an account of the state of affairs in Scotland between the death of Alexander III and the Battle of Bannockburn on the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand, the conception of a "god, just and almighty" is in no way at odds with medieval Catholicism. (Conversely, although Wittig is clearly referring to the Judaic emphasis upon the Father which marked the Reformers, I doubt if they would have taken kindly to a parallel between themselves and an environment in which "no specifically Christian ideas are expressed"). As is so often the case in accounts of the work of the medieval poets, those aspects of their spiritual attitude which survive the Reformation are 'prophetic' and 'typically Scottish' whereas, in as much as they express religious viewpoints which the Reformation rejects, they are considered to be complying, no doubt unwillingly, with 'mere convention'.

In any case, the laying of denominational claims seems a trivial and fruitless response - indeed, as I have said, it is unintentionally obscurantist[5] - to that oustanding spiritual property which the medieval poet possessed and later Scottish poetry has never fully/

fully recovered, namely, the ability to relate his tale to a universally recognized frame of reference. Within that framework, the Scottish re-assertion of the God-given gift of free will which is the Bruce is self-evidently in the "richt". This reconciliation of "taill" and "moralitas" is a far cry from the Calvinist foretaste which Wittig sees. Indeed, Calvinism when it does emerge will feature as part of a wider process by which such reconciliation will be rendered almost impossible. Thus, as the poetry we are now discussing shares in the vision of existence upon which Henryson's poetry was based, so we are faced yet again with what was seen to be common in Henryson criticism, that is, the imposition of later qualities upon medieval poetry, whereby its truly unique qualities remain obscured.

In his recent History of Scottish Literature, Maurice Lindsay rightly complains of such impositions.[6] In truth, however, his own interpretation concentrates very much on what I have called the "taill" which, as was seen in the case of Henryson, is equally effective in obscuring the medieval synthesis. At times, what emerges from such a treatment is something akin to a twentieth century secular ideal. For example, Lindsay describes the death of Wallace in Blind Hary's poem thus:

> He is then persistently bothered in his last moments by an official priest, as both Mary, Queen of Scots and Montrose were similarly pestered.[7]

This gives an entirely false picture of the event. The powerful final pages of the poem are based upon the fact that the cause of Wallace and of Scotland is the Christian cause, while Edward's reign is completely contrary to Christian principles. Hary quite clearly equates Wallace with the Christian martyrs:

On/

> On Wednysday the fals Sotherun furth brocht
> Till martyr him, as thai befor had wrocht.
> Rycht suth it is, a martyr was Wallace,
> As Osuuald, Edmunt, Eduuard and Thomas.
> (1305-1308)

As Matthew P McDiarmid points out in the notes to his edition of the poem:

> These martyrs are respectively, Saint Oswald, King of Northumbria and Saint Edmund, King of East Anglia, both killed by Danes in 870; Saint Edward, brother of King Ethelred, killed by Danes in 979; Saint Thomas Becket, murdered in 1170.[8]

It might well be worth noting here in relation to what we have already said of Barbour's 'universal context', that all the saints with whom Wallace is compared are in fact English. It is therefore in Christian and universal terms (albeit seen through Scottish eyes) not by national rivalry, that Wallace and Edward are judged. This being so, far from its being irrelevant, the question of whether or not Wallace is to be allowed a priest is of crucial importance, it being the factor from which the final judgement emerges. To illustrate this, it is necessary to quote at some length:

> Wyth a bauld spreit gud Wallace blent about.
> "A preyst," he askyt, "for god at deit on tre."
> King Eduuard then commaundyt his clerge
> And said, "I charge, apayn off los off lywe,
> Nane be sa bauld yon tyrand for to schrywe.
> He has rong lang in-contrar my hienace."
> (1310-15)

In saying thus, Edward is setting his own authority before that of God. That it is an awesome perversion, bringing against him an awful judgement is pointed out at length, the more powerfully in that it is voiced by the Bishop of Canterbury. Although himself a leading English churchman, he must do so in that the issue rises above the national and he must speak with a universal voice:

A/

A blyst byschop sone present in that place,
Off Canterbery he than was rychtwys lord,
Agayn the king he maid this rycht record
And said, "My selff sall her his confessioun,
Gyff I haiff mycht, in-contrar off thi croun.
And thou throu force will stop me off this thing,
I wow to god quhilk is my rychtwys king,
That all Ingland I sall her enterdyt
And mak It knawin thou art ane herretyk.
The sacrament off kyrk I sall him geiff.
Syn tak thi chos, to sterwe or lat him leiff.
It war mar waill in worschip off thi croun
To kepe sic ane in lyff in thi bandoun,
Than all the land and gud at thow has refyd,
Bot cowatice the ay fra honour dreyfyd.
Thow has thi lyff rongyn in wrangis deid.
That sall be seyn on the, or on thi seid"
The king gert charge thai suld the byschop ta,
Bot sad lordys consellyt to lat him ga.
All wyse men said at his desyr was rycht.
To Wallace than he rakyt in thar sicht
And sadly hard his confessioun till ane end.
Humbly to god his spreyt he thar commend,
Lawly him serwyt with hartlye deuocioun
Apon his kneis and said ane orysoun.
His leyff he tuk and to West-monaster raid.
(1316-41)

The bishop's judgement is made in the name of God, his "rychtwys king", that is in terms which all men, at least "All wyse men", must recognize. The accusations later brought against Wallace by a clerk, based upon his treachery to Edward and to England are clearly seen to be inadequate in the light of the bishop's speech. Wallace rejects his arguments, in that he has already been reconciled to a higher authority:

... "For all thi roid rahres
Thou has na charge, suppos at I did mys.
Yon blyst byschop has hecht I sall haiff blis
And I trow weill at god sall it admyt.
This febyll wordis sall nocht my conscience smyt.
(1362-66)

His cause likewise is placed before that authority:

To god and man the rycht full weill is knawin.
(1388)

There follows the passage which Lindsay actually quotes, although even by itself, it provides no evidence that Wallace considers himself/

himself pestered. It is in fact at Wallace's request that:

> ... lord Clyffurd that knycht,
> To lat him haiff his psalter buk in sycht.
> He gert a preyst It oppyn before him hauld
> Quhill thai till him had done all at thai wauld.
> Stedfast he red, for ocht thai did him thar.
> Feyll Sotheroun said at Wallace feld na sayr.
> Gud deuocioun so was his begynnyng,
> Conteynd tharwith, and fair was his endyng.
> (1397-1404)

Both Hary and Barbour are concerned with material events, interpreted to a large extent in national terms. I have tried to indicate, however, that the extent to which they achieve a wider authority and validity, in terms of time as well as of space, is a result of the spiritual, universal values which their poetry assumes. In other respects of course both poems and particularly the Wallace are intensely patriotic. However, an account of the life of Wallace based entirely on material terms would find a natural climax in the spectacular brutality with which his story closes. It is all the more noteworthy then, that Blind Hary makes no mention of these facts. Instead, as we have seen, the poem's climax and the final assessment is couched in spiritual terms, and it is these terms, although for the most part unspoken, that give the poems a dignity and a relevance which a dramatisation of the material events with which they deal could never alone achieve.

In the Kingis Quair of James I,[9] this wider spiritual framework becomes a more conscious and a more central concern. The poet progresses from a state in which he is a victim of Fortune, through personal love, to a wisdom which transforms that love to a type of the eternal love which, in being permanent, lies beyond the power of Fortune. Its essential purpose then, as in the poetry of Henryson and in all the philosophical poetry of the age, is the reconciliation of/

of the seeming vagaries of human existence with an ordered universe, a reconciliation which is ultimately facilitated by Christian teaching. Like Cresseid, the poet is initially oppressed by the workings of Fortune:

> The bird, the beste, the fische eke in the see,
> They lyve in fredome, everich in his kynd,
> And I, a man, and lakkith libertee!
> Quhat schall I seyne, quhat resoune may I fynde
> That fortune suld do so?
> (27)

From an unenlightened point of view, life seems to present the same problems as it does in The Taill of the Paddok and the Mous:[10]

> Thus stant thy confort in unsekirnesse,
> And wantis it that suld the reule and gye;
> Ryght as the schip that sailith sterëles
> Upon the rokkis most to harmes hye,
> For lak of that suld bene hir supplye,
> So standis thou here in this warldis rage
> And wantis that suld gyde all thy viage.
> (15)

Here again as in the fable, the missing solution to a world subject to Fortune and to change is a pilot, a constant which is impervious to Fortune. In the fable it was termed good deeds, in the present poem it takes the form of true love, and it is the selflessness which is common to both that provides a permanent beyond the power of Fortune:

> ... Tak hede, man, and behold
> Yond there thou seis the hiest stage and gree,
> Off agit folk with hedis hore and olde,
> Yon were the folk that never changë wold
> In lufe, bot trewly servit him alway,
> In every age, unto thaire ending day.
> (83)

Such a selfless and enduring virtue transcends change in that it emulates the ultimate expression of that virtue by which Christ defeated time and change. To live thus, is to:

> Tak him before in all thy governance,
> That in his hand the stere has of you all;
> And pray unto his hyë purueyance
> Thy lufe to gye, and on him traist and call,
> That corner-stone and ground is of the wall,
> That/

That failis nought; and trust, withoutin drede,
Unto thy purpose sone he sall the lede.
(130)

The result of all this is the poet's recognition that Fortune is not all powerful, that although:

... sum clerkis trete,
That all your chancë causit is tofore
(146)

yet:

... other clerkis halden that the man
Has in him self the chose and libertee
To cause his awin fortune, how or quhan
That him best lest, and no necessitee
Was in the hevin at his nativitee.
(147)

The proof of the correctness of this second opinion is in that:

... quhare a persone has tofore knawing
Off it that is to fallë purposely,
Lo, Fortune is bot wayke in suich a thing,
Thou may wele wit, and here ensample quhy:
To god, that is the firste cause onëly
Off every thing, there may no fortune fall.
And quhy? for he forknawin is of all.
(148)

The terms used here are almost the same as those used in The Preiching of the Swallow, although in this case the lesson is learned in happier circumstances.[11] It is that freedom from Fortune equates exactly with knowledge of God, which is itself synonymous with the imitation of Christ.

Criticism of the Kingis Quair (and Matthew P McDiarmid's introduction to the present edition is no exception to this) has often indicated that the personal love story of James I and Joan Beaufort is the chief value of the poem, as opposed to any conventional allegorical content.[12] This personal feature is certainly worthy of recognition, but it is obvious, even from the brief extracts quoted above, that there is more to the poem, and that it is more than merely dead tradition. It is a symptom of the disunion of world and spirit which marks/

marks post-medieval life, that it is felt necessary to define the value of the poem in terms of the one at the expense of the other. As I have stressed throughout, such an exclusive approach possesses inborn barriers which virtually render impossible an apprehension of the entirely different way of seeing upon which medieval poetry is grounded, a way of seeing based upon the universal inclusiveness of all things, material and spiritual. Assuredly, the universal landscape of the Kingis Quair is all the fresher for the personal content, but surely the more important feature to be recognized in our own age, is how much the personal content rises above its own time and place, by virtue of its relationship to a universal landscape. Again and again, we find the assumption of this relationship at the heart of the poetry of the Middle Ages. Of Sir Richard Rolland's Buke of the Howlat,[13] Matthew P McDiarmid himself writes:

> ... that the narrative which accompanies the eulogy (of the House of Douglas) is not the 'pleasant by-work' that Diebler thought it,[14] but the necessary frame of a moral interpretation that comprehends and transcend its political reference.[15]

Mr McDiarmid's assertion comes in answer to the fact that:

> Since Francis Amour's edition of 1892 and 1897[16] no comprehensive commentary on the meaning or merit of the poem has been attempted, a neglect that is largely due, I believe, to the misrepresentations of its editors. Its narrative - of the owl that complained of its bare appearance to the Pope and Emperor of birds, and by their intercession with Nature obtained from the others a plumage that its pride soon lost - contained a lengthy allusion to the great House of Douglas, soon to be forfeited; the editors' failure to read this political reference aright, and especially their failure to relate it to any vitally unifying theme, presented the puzzled reader with a mysteriously flawed poem, a succession of spirited but apparently purposeless scenes.[17]

Furthermore:

> Nor can we say that modern criticism has advanced beyond such superficial readings, when we find/

> find Gregory Smith presenting the Howlat as a mere poetical exercise inspired by a sense of the absurd (Transition Period 1900, pp.74-6), and Kurt Wittig dismissing it in a phrase as "a bird-allegory of pro-Douglas tendencies" (The Scottish Tradition in Literature 1958 p.104). -18

The barrier to a full interpretation, which in the case of the criticism to which Mr McDiarmid refers proves insurmountable, lies in the obsessive need of such criticism to relate the poem to specific material events. On fiding that the poem will not in fact fit neatly into any such pattern it is left with no choice but to conclude that the work is inadequately constructed and fails to achieve any meaningful whole. Now it is indeed the case that the Buke of the Howlat is heavy with references to material events. This point is not itself at issue. What is of interest, is the inability of critics who themselves favour a materialistic approach to make anything of the poem, even in relation to the material events to which it alludes. The reason for this breakdown lies in the fact that the criticism remains within the material, while the poetry to which it is applied does not. Thus such criticism exists in ignorance not only of the further dimension that the poem contains, but of the qualification which that dimension brings to bear upon the material itself. As we have seen in earlier examples, what emerges from such an approach may be an interpretation which is, by its own standard, satisfactory, although in terms of medieval poetry and the view of life it contains, it can never be a complete analysis. However, on other occasions, and the present piece is an example, the terms of the poet defy any neat relationship with historical or sociological fact, and interpretation is thereby confounded.

With reference to such facts alone Holland's poem remains elusive. As it was written during the reign of James II, and as one of the major national events of that reign was the destruction of Douglas power by the crown, the initial assumption of such a critical approach, given that Holland is known to have been an adherent of the House of Douglas, is that the lesson of the fable of the owl refers overwhelmingly to the king. However, Holland's eulogy of the Douglas family is based upon its continuance in that tradition of loyalty inaugurated by the relationship between the Good Sir James and King Robert I, effectively thwarting any such interpretation.[19] The problem of such criticism is, that existing as it does within the material, it must seek to explain everything within the material context. It follows that when, as in the present poem, satire and moral judgements are involved, it must be ascertained against whom precisely they are levelled, and conversely on behalf of whom they are made. In such a context factionalism is inherent. When the terms of this factionalism cannot readily be attributed, the method flounders. An interpretation of the poem as a warning to the crown cannot easily be maintained. The alternative which immediately suggests itself, that the warning is in fact meant for the Douglases themselves is, given the eulogy which the poem contains, equally unthinkable in this critical context. At this point, the machinery of such criticism jams, and attention to the poem is thereafter reduced to a phrase on the assumption that it presents no discernible cohesion.

Yet again, the source of this breakdown of communications between modern critic and medieval poet lies in the fact that the former has little awareness of the extra-material aspect which the latter's vision included nor, it follows, of the profound modification which this factor brought to bear on the poet's conception of material events.

As I have said, the Buke of the Howlat contains many social references. The seeds of contention existed in Scotland, central to which must have been the inevitable tension between the crown and its most powerful subjects, the Douglases. On a wider scale, Christendom itself was threatened with turmoil in a period of schism between pope and anti-pope. Of all this Holland is intensely aware, as Mr McDiarmid's essay clearly shows. In his poem he investigates the nature of harmony and the cause of disharmony. For the medieval poet however, such questions do not exist within the material sphere only. Rather, that sphere exists in harmony when it is at one with the eternal dimension, and discord arises when the ultimate authority of that dimension is usurped.

The fable of the owl is a chronicle of just such usurpation. The moral suggested is similar to that which we noted in Henryson's The Taill of the Wolf and the Wedder.[20] As with the Wedder, the owl, in the elevated circumstances in which, courtesy of Nature, he finds himself, comes to believe that his power is innate and not conferred. So too, this mistake is the cause of his undoing:

> I couth nocht won in to welth wreth wast
> I was so wantoun of will/my werdis or wan
> Thus for my hicht I am hurt and harmit in haist
> Cairfull and caytif for craft yat I can
> Quhen I was hewit as heire all ther' hieast
> ffra rule ressoun and richt redless I ran
> Tharfor I ly in ye lyme lympit lathast
> Now mark your mirour be me all maner of man
> Ye princis prentis of pryde for penneis and prow
> That pullis ye pure ay
> Ye sall syng as I say Thus I worn yow.
> All your welth will away
>
> (963-975)

Just as I have suggested that The Taill of the Wolf and the Wedder could serve as a simple prototype for the more specifically applied of Henryson's social fables, so the story of the owl provides a reminder to all, church, crown, nobility, that the conduct of their/

their power must relate ultimately to an authority beyond the material sphere in which it has its being, "quha culd it weill apply".[21] Thus stated, this may seem a fairly simple point. It has to be made however, in the face of the obvious difficulty encountered by so much later criticism in recognizing it, the more so in that such difficulty is itself indicative of the obstacles opposing the achievement of a similarly universal statement by post-medieval man.

It is in the poetry of Henryson himself that this statement finds the fullest expression. However, as I have sought to show in the present chapter, a recognition of the values that permeate Henryson's poetry is necessary to anything like a full understanding of any of the poetry of his age.

The various tales told in the anonymous Thre Prestis of Peblis[22] reflect in a far simpler form the different points of the spectrum within which world and spirit inter-relate, so much more fully illuminated in Henryson's Moral Fables. Each of the three priests tells a tale. Interestingly, the stories are told, presumably in order of merit, with regard to the extent of the worldly wisdom each priest has accumulated. In fact, however, although every tale is exemplary, it is the last and the least worldly wise of the story tellers who is clearly the most aware in specifically spiritual terms.

Pride of place is given to the most far travelled of the company:

> "The first tail tald mot be Maister Johne;
> For he hath bene in monie uncouth land:
> In Portingale and in Civile the grand, -
> In fyve kinrikis of Spane al hes he bene,
> In four christin and ane heathin I wene, -
> In Rome, Flanders, and in Venice toun,
> And uther Lands sundrie up and doun.
> (50-56)

Master John's tale expounds the proper manner in which the three estates should function, and that such functioning should be assisted, and not hampered as is clearly the actual situation, by the crown. Of particular interest is his condemnation of interference by the crown in the business of church appointments. Given his wide practical experience these are matters with which Master John is best qualified to deal. The type of government which he advocates is morally good and at one with spiritual values, but the actual business of explaining the world in relation to these values is beyond his field.

Master Archibald, the second story teller, is less widely experienced:

> Presumteouslie I think not to presume,
> As I that never travellit bot to Rome,
> To tel ane tail.
>
> (47-49)

His story also advises the king on the nature of good government. He does however indicate reasons for the desirability of such conduct beyond that of general material well-being. In essence he reminds the king that his power is bestowed from above and that he must account for the use which he has made of it. Thus, a frivolous king is warned that:

> Of all the Realme quhom off ye beir the Crown,
> Of lawit and leirit, riche, pure, up and doun;
> The quhilk and thay be slane with mans hand,
> Ane count thairof ye sall gif I warrand.

We can recall a similar reminder in several of Henryson's social fables. But if the first two stories stem from that same view of life which produced the Moral Fables, that is a view of life which seeks to relate the world to the spirit, the emphasis is upon the practical ordering of that world, in other words, upon the conduct of the "taill".

The full representation of this view of life, which the totality of The Thre Prestis of Peblis seeks to illustrate, requires the story of Sir William, the last priest, in which the ultimate values of the "moralitas" are asserted.

As I have noted, Sir William's spiritual awareness is matched by his lack of worldly knowledge. As he says of himself:

> To grit clargie I can not count nor clame,
> Nor yit am I not travellit as ar ye,
> In monie sundrie Land beyond the see.
> (40-42)

His tale expresses human life in terms of eternal values. A rich man is commanded to appear before his king. As his past conduct causes him to fear for his reception, he asks his friends to speak for him at court. His greatest love refuses, as does the friend, second in his affections. He is forced to turn shamefacedly to one whom he had considered the least of his brethren, to whom he had shown scant respect, but who nonetheless offers to plead for him before the king.

As we are told in the latter part of the tale the king is God before whom the man is called by death. The behaviour of the three friends is an assessment of worldly values in the light of this context. The first and greatest friend is wealth, which of course is of no worth at all beyond death. The second is natural affection for one's own family which, in being natural, merits no special reward in eternal terms. Only the third friend, the least regarded in this world, transcends death and has influence in the eternal judgement:

> This thrid freind quhome wil we cal lat sie;
> Nocht ellis bot Almos deid and cheritie.
> (1309-10)

In comparison to the power with which Henryson, for example, illustrates similar matters, the tenor of Sir William's tale appears as that of a/

a simple sermon, and the impact of the lesson is consequently less effective. Nevertheless, on its level the tale seeks to lead the reader to the perception of that which is of permanent value in the material world, and thereby provides a means by which that world might be reconciled with the eternal. It should of course be acknowledged here that Sir William's tale is closely related to Everyman[23] which is generally taken to contain the essence of the medieval attitude. This is indicative of the oneness of late medieval Scotland with that attitude and, also, in consideration of Everyman's Flemish source, with the European tradition:

> Quhair ever thow ga, in eird or art,
> With the, my friend, yit sall I never part;
> Quhair ever thow ga, suppose a thowsand shore the,
> Even I, thy Almos deid, sall ga befoir the;
> For as thow seis watter dois slokkin fyre,
> Sa do I, Almos deid, the judges ire.
> (1315-20)

As with the Moral Fables, a total picture of the vision upon which The Thre Prestis of Peblis is founded depends upon our taking the poem as a whole.[24] The eternal judge and the affairs of humanity exist within a single frame; the poet's task is to further an appreciation of those values by which the two can exist in harmony. As I sought to emphasize in the case of Henryson, the principle of reconciliation is at the heart of the vision. All things on earth must relate ultimately to eternal standards. World and spirit are not however mutually exclusive, as the basis of the principle is a striving to bring the two into accord. Sir William can, without much contradiction, tell his tale to an accompaniment of roast capon and home-brewed ale.[25] As I have indicated elsewhere, this is an important point in that it later ceased to be the case, with implications of the most profound nature.

It would not be possible in the present context to give a full account of all the poetry which medieval Scotland produced. I have spent some time on a few poems which are perhaps less available and less read than the work of more famous poets. I have also made mention of poems, Barbour's Bruce for example, in which, by virtue of the practical nature of their subject matter, we may fail to recognize the universal foundation upon which they are built. With reference to all such instances, it should now be clear that any attempt at a true understanding of the poetry of medieval Scotland must first and foremost take account of that vision of life which we examined at length in the poetry of Henryson, and which pervades all the poetry of his age. However, for reasons of space, I must henceforth restrict my comments to those writers who, with Henryson himself, are generally regarded as being the major literary figures of the period.

Chapter IV:
Douglas, Dunbar and the Sixteenth Century

Gavin Douglas's Palice of Honour[1] is a work which seldom recieves unqualified praise. Modern taste cannot easily accept the extent to which Douglas uses the poem as a means of displaying his poetic virtuosity. In reading it, we can recognize the basis of such a reaction. C S Lewis was correct when he said of the poem that "its vice is excess", (although he simultaneously put the matter more positively saying also that its "quality is prodigality").[2] However there are occasions on which such complaints, which are based essentially upon changing attitudes towards poetic technique, merge into an unjustifiable rejection of the whole system of thought upon which the poem is based. For example, Maurice Lindsay has recently reacted to the Palice of Honour as follows:

> Douglas's "pilgrim", in approved medieval fashion falls asleep in a "garden of pleasure" on a May morning. He dreams that he is in the middle of a forest, beside a gloomy river in flood. After the manner of the infinitely superior "Golden Targe" of Dunbar - there appears a procession of sages, led by Queen Minerva followed by a curious collection of characters out of classical antiquity, and then by Venus and her court, with Cupid in attendance. Her followers indulge in a far from spontaneous music-making...which may have pleased Boethius in Elysium, but hardly excites the twentieth century reader. However, these learned sounds inspired the dreaming poet to strike up a ballad of his own, a little number about inconstant love. ... Douglas's dreaming poet was promptly arrested and arraigned before the court of Venus. ... On Calliope's pleading, Venus frees the poet on "payment" of a poem in her praise. In the care of a nymph provided by Calliope, the poet sets out on his journey to the Palice of Honour, passing, among other topographical and historical features, the fountain of the Muses, where both Ovid and Virgil happen at that moment to be reciting. ... The Palace itself, which sounds rather like a Highland exercise in Gothic revivalism, ... contains Venus on a throne, as well as a mirror that enables the poet to see at a glance every earthly deed. Having/

> Having been introduced to the staff of the Palace of Honour's household - Constancy, Liberality, Discretion, Conscience, and so on - the nymph leads the poet into a garden. We are spared further tediums by his carelessness in falling into the moat.[3]

The above passage is followed by a short description of King Hart,[4] on the assumption that it too was written by Douglas, (as indeed it may well have been), both poems being summarized in the same, somewhat flippant tone. Such a reaction is not simply a refusal to consider seriously the methods by which Douglas displays his poetical expertise, (although any such refusal is in itself questionable); it is an assumption that the entire content of the poem is no more than a vehicle to facilitate this display. The whole moral investigation upon which the Palice of Honour is based, and the allegorical framework through which it is interpreted, are dismissed as though they were no more than an extension of Douglas's poetic technique. The unfavourable comparison with Dunbar's "Golden Targe" only serves to underline this fact. In terms of mastery over the aureate style, such an evaluation may well be correct, but this only points to the fact that such is the extent of Mr Lindsay's consideration of the Palice of Honour. Within that genre of which the "Golden Targe" is a part, the creation of a perfectly wrought poem in the high style, justified by the innate attractions of that style and the artistry with which the poet manages it, is clearly Dunbar's main concern. On such occasions the use of allegorical figures are indeed, to a large extent, a component of the style, their significance being, in intellectual and moral terms at least, in no way complex. This can hardly be said of the Palice of Honour. The comparison with this particular poem by Dunbar may well indicate Douglas's stylistic limitations, but even more so, it indicates the/

the limitations of modern criticism which fails to take into account the moral universe in which the medieval poet moved, or the allegorical method by which he sought to comprehend that universe.

Fully utilized, the allegory was, as Priscilla Bawcutt has put it, "a vehicle for psychological exploration and the discussion of ideas".[5] It is certainly so in the present poem. As she points out:

> Like so many dream allegories, the Palice of Honour is concerned with a poet's education. ... by the end of the poem he - and by implication the reader - has acquired new insights (or shed some at least of his ignorance) about love, poetry and honour.[6]

In the final passages of the poem, it is clear that Douglas equates Honour with God. David F C Coldwell has noted that:

> After passing through the outer courts of the palace the poet finally achieves his goal: he sees, however imperfectly (through a boir) the Court of Honour, and learns that it is identical with the Kingdom of God.

This is underlined by the fact that:

> Descriptions of magnificent Palaces, glittering with jewels, abound in courtly allegory, but this account is clearly reminiscent of St John's vision of the New Jerusalem. (Rev. xxi).[7]

At base then, the poem is an investigation of the varying worth of the numerous codes by which man can choose to live his life. The criterion of worth, is whether or not these routes lead to admittance to the Palice, which is the presence of God. In other words, Douglas is testing human values by considering their validity in an eternal context. It cannot be said that he comprehends such matters on anything like the level on which Henryson treated similar concepts. As a result the elucidation of his subject in the poem is less convincing, and we must remember also the extent to which his attention was taken up by more purely poetic considerations. Nevertheless, the/

the basic questions which the poem investigates are hardly trivial. C S Lewis was speaking simply of the effort required of the modern reader when faced with Douglas's language when he said that "If we fail in the training, then it is we and not the poet who are the provincials".[8] Our provinciality is of an even more serious order if we fail in our sympathy with the vision of existence which the medieval poet held, through a refusal to take account of the allegorical form in which he expressed it. In our modern world such narrowness is common. Its correction cannot but be beneficial, nowhere more so than in the Scotland of the present with regard to its own past.

Early in the Palice of Honour, the moral starting point of the poem, the ambiguity of human life and of its values is stated:

> Inconstant warld and quheill contrarious!
> (172 passim)

There follows a procession during which the personifications of the various codes by which the Palice is sought pass before the dreaming poet. Firstly, there are those who in their wisdom follow the Queen of Sapience. Her court includes not only those such as Aristotle (250), who have sought wisdom honestly, but also those who, like Achitophel and Sinone[9] have used their cunning to further falsehood and will never enter the Palice:

> "Ingress to haue," quod thay "we not presume",
> (292)

Clearly, even wisdom is not enough in itself, and must be governed by a higher value. There follows the court of chastity, led by Diana and made remarkable by the scarcity of its adherents. Thirdly, the Court of Venus arrives, in the description of which Douglas takes the opportunity of displaying his knowledge of the medieval tradition of the love pageant.

The essential intellectual purpose of the poem, however, is the search for a means of escape from the ambiguity of human values, the discovery of a constant, the validity of which extends beyond the material world, by which it is capable of opening the gates of the eternal Palice. Therefore, the man who seeks to rise above the vagaries of fortune, cannot but remark upon the close kinship between fortune's inconstancy and that of the court which is passing before him. This takes the form of a "ballet of inconstant love" (pp. 24-25), the result of which is that the poet is charged with blasphemy against the Court of Venus. At this point however, the Muses arrive and by the intercession of Calliope the prisoner is released. It is in the company of the Muses that the poet finally reaches the Palice and gains a brief glimpse of Honour which, as we have noted, is seen to be synonymous with God:

> Douglas is no mystic, but by using such imagery (which, "derives partly from St John's vision of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21), partly from traditional ideas about contemplation associated with the writings of St Gregory"), he seems almost to equate Honour with God himself. Later he expresses a highly medieval rejection of all forms of earthly glory in favour of the true honour that survives death and transcends the understanding of the world.[10]

Thus, the surest means of entrance to the presence of God is seen to be a life of moral virtue, a factor which maintains its value beyond the terms of material existence:

> "Honour," quod scho, "to this heuinlie King
> Differris richt far fra warldlie gouerning,
> Quhilk is bot Pompe of eirdlie dignitie,
> Geuin for estait of blude, micht or sic thing.
> And in this countrie Prince, Prelate or King
> Allanerlie sall for vertew honourit be.
> For eirdlie gloir is nocht bot vanitie
> That as we sa suddanelie will wend,
> Bot verteous Honour neuer mair sall end."
> (1972-80)

Priscilla Bawcutt is certainly correct when she points out that:/

that:

> - there is an ambiguity in Douglas's conception of Honour ... Honour's court contains chiefly heroic warriors and patriots, some of whom might find it difficult to get into the Christian heaven.[11]

However, while such ambiguity contradicts the lines quoted above, they nevertheless remain sound in themselves. Again, Douglas seems to be in control of his subject matter when he describes the ship of grace as being the means of traversing safely the waters of the world. As in earlier uses of the image,[12] it is seen that, necessary to a successful crossing is the presence of Christ, the helmsman, manifested in the emulation of His example of selflessness:

> Than schip brokin sall ye droun in endles pane,
> Except be faith ye find the plank agane
> Be Christ, wirking gude warkis, I vnderstand.
> Remane thairwith, thir sall yow bring to land.
> (1392-95)

There is no denying that Henryson's ability to cope with such matters is far greater than anything we will come across in the Palice of Honour. It was for this reason that I employed the work of the earlier poet as a basis for the present study. As I have said, in the case of each individual writer, we must take factors of ability and temperament into account. The resolution of the ambiguities of human existence must begin at the individual level. At this point of his development at least, the contradictions which remain in the Palice of Honour would seem to indicate the limits of Douglas's personal reconciliation of the demands of world and spirit. However, the level of success in this is of secondary importance. What must be stressed is that throughout this late medieval period, the principle upon which the poetry was founded remained one of reconciliation despite any variation in the level at which it was expressed.

In relation to such matters, perhaps the most interesting feature/

feature of the Palice of Honour is the role attributed to the Muses. The fact that it is the Muses who accomplish the poet's release from the power of Venus, and by extension, from the "quheill contarious" (172 passim) of fortune, in indicative of the special role attributed to the creative arts in resolving the ambiguities of human existence. The nature of this role is further emphasized by the fact that it is through the assistance of the Muses that the poet gains entrance to the Palice. Viewed thus, poetry becomes nothing short of a vehicle by which world and spirit can achieve reconciliation. The terms in which the Muses are described illustrate such a function:

> Yone ar the folk that comfortis euerie spreit
> Be fine delite and dite Angelicall,
> Causand gros leid of maist gudnes gleit.
>
> Yone is the Court of plesand steidfastnes,
> Yone is the Court of constant merines,
> Yone is the Court of Ioyous discipline,
> Quhilk causis folk thair purpois to expres
> In ornate wise, prouokand with glaidnes
> All gentill hartis to thair lair Incline.
> (844-52)

The poem's resolution is achieved by the working of Calliope, the same power whom Henryson called the "finder of all armony"[13] corroborating the reconciliation implicit in terms such as "plesand steidfastnes", "constant merines" and "Ioyous discipline". The effect is the establishment of a workable relationship between the material and the eternal. These phrases, culminating in "Ioyous discipline" - the starkest contrast and therefore the highest reconciliation - encapsulate the principle upon which the world we are studying is based. "Ioyous discipline" is a precise expression of the proper relationship between world and spirit, "taill" and "moralitas", and it is at once a total merger of form and content, being also a definition of the function of poetry, and of the poet's role of expounding and preserving that relationship.

The assumption of such a role is, as I have stressed throughout, the fundamental feature which distinguishes the poetry of the late Middle Ages in Scotland as elsewhere. The lasting significance of that poetry is a practical benefit which such a vision of existence facilitates. To place human activity in relationship with eternal and universal factors, is in effect to celebrate that which is enduringly human as opposed to the material idiosyncrasies of any particular historical era. The result is that the poetry itself, being based upon the perception of the permanent, is in turn endowed with something of that permanence. In varying degrees, this endowment distinguishes all the poetry of the period. Given the particuar nature of his task, that is the translation of a poem historically far removed from his own world, Douglas's masterpiece, The Eneados[14], provides an interesting example of the working of this quality.

I have said that the practical benefit of the vision of life I have described, is that it facilitated a universality of utterance, through which the poetry of late medieval Scotland continues to have living value beyond its own time and place. This is displayed in The Eneados, whether we read it as Douglas's own work, or in relation to the life that it breathes into Virgil. By virtue of that vision, Douglas's response to Virgil is a response to that which is perpetually human in the ancient poet, beyond the material particulars of his situation and as a consequence, his translation bequeaths the same eternal qualities to the audiences of later ages. As I have said, success in this is qualified by the abilities of the individual poet, but within this qualification it remains an essential property of the period.

In the case of Douglas's Eneados it is a property to which criticism consistently makes reference. C S Lewis has noted that:/

that:

> Douglas shocks us by being closer to Virgil than we. Once a man's eyes have been opened to this, he will find instances everywhere. ... Time after time Douglas is nearer to the original than any version could be which kept within the limits of later classicism. And that is almost another way of saying that the real Virgil is very much less "classical" than we had supposed. To read Latin again with Douglas's version fresh in our minds is like seeing a favourite picture after it has been cleaned. Half the 'richness' and 'sobriety' which we have been taught to admire turns out to have been only dirt; the 'brown trees' disappear and where the sponge has passed the glowing reds, the purples, and the transparent blues leap into life. ... Douglas gives us new eyes - unless,of course, we approach him with the assumption that wherever medieval Virgilianism differed from humanistic, the medieval must have been simply wrong.[15]

Similarly, David F C Coldwell remarks that:

> Latinity seems to have cut off the Latin classics from popular imagination. Douglas saw far less difference between the lives of Scots and Romans that Dryden did.[16]

What these critics are celebrating is the continuing vitality of The Eneados. The source of this quality is a vision of life which seeks accord between world and spirit, and which will therefore lay its emphasis upon those aspects of the former which relate to the latter, that is to say the enduringly valid features of humanity, or the eternally vital. John Speirs demonstrates Douglas's vitality at some length, in comparison to the artificiality of Dryden's translation, and he goes on to indicate the source of Douglas's strength:

> Douglas reveres his poet, but there is at the same time an understanding, a sympathy which is direct, not interfered with by any historical sense. Modern readers, perhaps overburdened by their historical sense, easily become pre-occupied with the differences between themselves and the poets of the past, over-emphasize these, and so make communication more difficult; for, unless we recognize some common human experience, there can be no direct communication.[17]

The basis for this is that:

> There is, in Douglas's Aeneid - notably in Book IV - a religious and moral seriousness, a medieval gravity. Douglas belongs, after all, to the age of Chaucer and Shakespeare, a larger, more humane and profound age than that of Dryden.[18]

In this latter extract, Mr Speirs indicates that the enduring quality of the poem stems from the particular properties of the age in which it was written. The nature of these properties I have discussed at length, that is the ability of the poetry to transcend its time and place by viewing the world in relation to the eternal context, whereby it is concerned with that which is of perpetual validity. In contrast to this, a poetry which places its emphasis on the temporal, in Dryden's case for example, a devotion to classicism, lives by its own choice in the shadow of obsolescence. In the former extract quoted, Mr Speirs refers to the subsequent loss of this universal voice which Douglas shares with the poets of his age. The problems which he indicates exist for the modern reader in responding to the essential qualities of medieval poetry, point implicitly to the difficulties which face the modern writer in reproducing those qualities. The present study has been undertaken in recognition of the barriers which confront both groups. If humanity at large, that is the reader, is to be maintained in all its fullness, it is vital that the writer continues to find his way across the barriers. The great writers, those who endure, have always done so:

> ... the great figures of imaginative literature are perpetually contemporary, as I think Mr Eliot has said; and that is what we feel them to be as we read about them. They never become history. Ancient or modern, they live in the perpetual present of mankind, crowding it with an accumulation of life and a living variety of human experience.[19]

The source of this phenomenon, the reason why such writers never become/

become history, is that principle of reconciliation by which the particulars of history are seen in their relationship to the universal. In the presence of this principle, late medieval Scotland produced a considerable body of such poetry. The country's subsequent experiences were, I believe, so particularly severe as to render its re-discovery exceptionally elusive. The nature of these experiences will be discussed in the following chapters. The results are indicated by the attitude of later criticism to the poetry. That poetry is based upon the inter-relationship of world and spirit. When the belief that these facets of existence can and should be reconciled is lost, there remains the possibility of a self-motivated material existence on the one hand, or, alternatively, the torturous maintenance of spiritual standards which have come to be seen as being in complete opposition to every aspect of the material world.

Maurice Lindsay's response to the Palice of Honour, which I have already remarked upon, is an example of the reaction to pre-modern life and poetry of one endowed with what John Speirs called "historical sense". Taken as absolute, this kind of historical sense involves of necessity, imaginative narrowness. Its basis being material, it has great difficulty in responding to the spiritual dimension which is a constant presence in medieval poetry. The opposite alternative is illustrated by Kurt Wittig, whose main concern in his treatment of Douglas, as in his treatment of all pre-Reformation Scottish poetry, is to prove that he is "very close to Calvin".[20] The proof of this comes in the quotation of a few lines in which Douglas speaks of God in terms which do not contradict the tenets of the reformers. It could be pointed out that they do not contradict medieval Catholicism either, while the extracts which Wittig cites could be countered by the quotation of passages of a/

a more specifically Catholic complexion. The fundamental objection to his interpretation however is the very existence of the poetry which he seeks to interpret. The mediatory function which as we have seen Douglas attributed to the Muses is the basis upon which the poetry of the Middle Ages rests. In denying the validity of any such function, Calvinism, when it did arrive, contributed greatly to the destruction of that foundation, and therefore of the poetic tradition which it had nurtured. If the attitudes which Wittig attributes to medieval Scotland were of any standing, then the poetry in which he claims to detect such attitudes simply would not have been written.

On the one hand then we have a view of existence which, in being wholly material, is incapable of dealing with the spiritual dimension of human experience. On the other, we have an embattled spirituality which is totally at odds with the world. Neither view is capable of treating humanity in its entirety and consequently neither view is equipped to deal with a poetic tradition which at all times seeks to do just that. This being the case, it is important that we come to a true recognition of the assumptions upon which medieval poetry was based, given both the difficulties faced by subsequent ages in perceiving the universality of its vision, and the fact that this universality is the means by which poetry continues to exist "in the perpetual present of mankind."

Within the limits of the present study, it is impossible to do justice to a poet of Douglas's stature. This is also unfortunately true in the case of William Dunbar.[21] As I have mentioned earlier, Dunbar is no philosopher. His work is immensely varied in style, in subject matter and in mood, but there is little of the spiritual and moral insight which is at the heart of Henryson's poetry.

Nevertheless, the vision of life which Henryson could investigate and expound is no less the ultimate reality for Dunbar. The establishment of this fact is a central feature of Dr Tom Scott's book, Dunbar a Critical Exposition of the Poems:

> The spiritual order is not obvious; indeed it is very difficult to discern because of the nature of the poems. They are tied to occasions, conventions, festivals, moods, social and historical happenings - all things which seem to argue an almost chaotic existence in time. But if we look long enough and close enough, the mask of time wears thin, we begin to see through it, and all its surface distractions, to a timeless order underneath: an order of evaluated experience.[22]

This is certainly the case, and it is another way of saying that in common with the other poets we have touched upon, Dunbar's poetry springs from the relationship of his material existence to a spiritual and eternal pattern. From the number of religious poems and moralities that Dunbar produced, the fact that his work has such a basis should be obvious. But as Dr Scott points out, this is not immediately so. Dunbar is far more of a personality than, for example, Henryson, and in some respects personality is a hindrance to the universal voice. In his religious poems Dunbar expresses his most deeply felt beliefs. Elsewhere, his poetry is often a witness to the disjunction that exists between the manner of human existence which these beliefs imply, and the actuality of the material world. Such concerns I have noted throughout. Henryson succeeded in reconciling the experience, and the necessary preliminary to this achievement, is the attainment of an internal and personal reconciliation. Dunbar fails to accomplish this in his poetry in as much as he fails to do so within himself. He can state his spiritual ideals, he can apply them to the world and see the contradictions which this presents, but as the contradictions begin within himself, he can effect no lasting reconciliation.

In his many moralizing poems, Dunbar presents a personality fluctuating between an awareness that:

> Heir nocht abydis, heir standis nothing stabill;
> This fals warld ay flittis to and fro;
> Now day up bricht, now nycht als blak as sabill
> Now eb, now flude, now freynd, now cruell fo,
> Now glaid, now said, now weill, now in to wo,
> Now cled in gold, dissolvit now in as;
> So dois this warld transitorie go:
> Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.
> (Vanitas Vanitatum et omnia Vanitas)

and the more positive response:

> Be mery man, and tak nocht fer in mynd
> The wavering of this wrechit vale of sorow;
> To God be hummle and to thi frend be kyind,
> And with thi nichtbour glaidlie len and borow -
> His chance this nycht, it may be thine to morow.
> Be mery,man, for any aventure;
> For be wismen it has bene said afforow
> Without glaidnes avalis no tresure.
> (Without Glaidnes avalis no Tresure)

Other poems of both types could be cited. While they are in no way incompatible, they do indicate the tension which Dunbar felt between the actuality of his world and his ultimate religious beliefs. Unlike the scholarly Henryson, Dunbar is very much a man of his world leading, as Dr Scott put it, "a chaotic existence in time". The truths of his religion remain for him the final reality, and in many of his poems, of which the above extracts are two examples, he seems to be seeking a way of life at one with that reality. The number of such poems, and the fluctuations which they present, do not suggest that he succeeded to any lasting extent. We recognize, and so does the poet himself - he regularly complains of the false standards of the court - that the demands of world and spirit will never find accord, while he remains in thrall to values which he knows to be worthless. But he never does manage to make the break. The universal values of his religion are at the heart of Dunbar's poetry, but he is influenced by the values of the court. Related to the moralizing/

moralizing poems are pieces such as "How sould I governe me" in which Dunbar is again seeking, ostensibly, a way of life at one with his spiritual values. The poem wisely concludes that:

> Sen all is jugit, bayth gud and ill,
> And no mannis toung I may had still,
> To do the best my mynde salbe;
> Lat everie man say quhat he will,
> The gratious God mot governe me.

On a similar theme, "May na Man now undemit be" concludes:

> And so I sall with Goddis grace
> Keip his command in to that cace,
> Keiping ay the Trinitie
> In hevin that I may haif ane place;
> For thair sall no man demit be.

However, in both poems these concluding assertions of spiritual worth are preceded by what are in effect lengthy complaints by William Dunbar the personality, rueing the fact that the said personality is sadly misinterpreted and undervalued. Such a confusion of standards indicates the difficulties which Dunbar felt in achieving a stable relationship between world and spirit.

Having said this, however, the more important point remains true that as with all the poetry discussed, Dunbar's work and his world are based upon "a timeless order underneath". If he does not perceive it, or express its working as comprehensively as did Henryson, his allegiance to it excels in other directions. Dunbar's greatness lies in his mastery of the poetic craft, and his celebrations of man's admittance to a "timeless order" in poems such as "Et nobis Puer natus est" and "Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro" are triumphs that remain aurally unsurpassed.

While Dunbar may have difficulty in reflecting the reconciliation of world and spirit from within the world, he shows in these religious poems a real consciousness of "the point of intersection of the timeless with time",[23] by which the principle of reconciliation/

reconciliation was introduced. Speaking of the poem "Et nobis Puer natus est", C S Lewis points out that "It has none of the modern - the German or Dickensian - attributes of Christmas".[24] While this is true, we need not turn for comparison to modern secularized notions of the events which Dunbar celebrates in his religious poems to illustrate the greater consciousness with which he viewed the subject. To turn to Dunbar's response to the Nativity, the Passion (The Passioun of Crist) or the Resurrection, from any account of these events which one is likely to hear through the medium of modern, popular Christianity, is to recognize the medieval poet's far greater awareness of the significance of what he is discussing to the fate of mankind. I am continuously amazed by the ability of popular Christianity, as presented for example in the media, to treat its subject without any reference to its significance. Such exercises, presumably intended to maintain the believer and convince the unconvinced, tend to present the events of Christian Gospels as a story, one which, it is hoped, will improve the listener but which, expressed thus, hardly provides him with an alternative philosophy of life. They will never succeed in their purposes while they pay no attention whatever to the question why.

Whether we accept their answer or not, the poets of the Middle Ages do at least provide one and as such can teach us a great deal. Some, such as Henryson in his Testament of Cresseid do so on a brilliant imaginative level. Dunbar does not manage this, but in his response to the sources of his religious philosophy, he shows an awareness of the implications of the events described which is rare in the modern world.

For Dunbar, all nature is redeemed by the once and for all intercession of the divine:

Syng, hevin imperiall, most of hicht,
Regions of air mak armony;
All fische in flud and foull of flicht
Be myrthfull and mak melody:
All Gloria in excelsis cry,
Hevin, erd, se, man, bird and best:
He that is crownit abone the sky
Pro nobis puer natus est.
(Et Nobis Puer natus est) (49-56)

Hitherto, man had been subject to nature, and therefore to mortality. In celebrating the Nativity, we are celebrating the beginning of the unique process by which mankind will be vouchsafed a place in the eternal pattern. In the birth of Christ, the power of nature (the sun) and of the old gods who, under nature had ruled human life (Phebus), is qualified:

The cleir sone quhome no clud devouris,
Surminting Phebus in the est,
Is cumin of his hevinly touris
Et nobis puer natus est.
(5-8)

Such for Dunbar is the significance of the events of Christianity. Man and God, world and spirit, are reconciled:

The fo is chasit, the battell is done ceis,
The presone brokin, the jevellouris fleit and flemit;
The weir is gon, confermit is the peis,
The fetteris lowsit and the dungeon temit,
The ransoun maid, the presoneris redemit;
The feild is win, ourcumin is the fo,
Dispulit of the tresur that he yemit:
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.
(Surrexit Dominus de Sepulchro) (33-40)

In these poems Dunbar is very much aware that he is bearing witness to the events by which mankind gained admittance to a "timeless order".

Again, in poems such as "The Maner of Passyng to Confessioun" and "The Tabill of Confessioun",[25] he acknowledges the obligations which this right of admittance places upon human life. Of these universal conditions, stemming from the existence of a "timeless order" Dr Scott writes:

The essence of this vision of life, as of all truly/

> truly religious visions, is communal: the furthering of the harmony of the community and its advancement is its chief concern. This is not to say communal as against personal - the distinction is totally unreal to the truly religious mind. There is no such thing as a person apart from the community, and a community is, by definition, a community of persons. The notion of individualism is a post-Reformation one: it would never have occurred to Dunbar, or any poet of his age or before it, to think of a split between the individual and society.[26]

The source of this vision of life was a recognition of man's relationship to an eternal backdrop, as a result of which, community was nothing less than all men of all times and of all places. It has been my contention throughout that this vision of life is the fundamental feature that distinguishes the achievement of Scotland's medieval poetry, in that it gave to the poets a voice which rose above the vagaries of material history. The demise of this poetic tradition, and indeed of the sense of community that it exhibited, is synonymous with the loss of the vision which promoted both. The beginning of this process was soon to follow.

Even in some of Dunbar's poetry, one senses that the view of life which he himself strives to uphold is not so readily agreed upon as it seemed to have been in the world in which Henryson or Chaucer wrote. Undeniably, when we note the stridency of some of his satires, we must first take those personal characteristics which I have mentioned into account. Beyond this however, there is a note of genuine moral outrage, of desperation in the face of a world which seems wholly incorrigible. What is emerging, is not simply a society which fails to live up to its own high principles, but one which is establishing its debased standards as the ideal. Black is setting itself up as white, and the poet's vehemence stems partially at least from his awareness that he is applying moral standards which have almost ceased to be understood.

We have an example of this in the poem "Remonstrance to the King".[27] The poem falls basically into two halves. The first of these lists those men about the court who have found favour with the king and, it would seem, rightly so, in that they make a worthwhile contribution to court and to society. The second part of the poem lists:

> ane uthir sort, more miserabill,
> thocht thai be nocht sa profitable
> (37-38)

all of whom are entirely unproductive and parasitic. Were this the extent of the poem's content, the moral would be simple enough; the poet would be illustrating the foibles of the material world which, looked upon from a timeless basis, would be universally obvious. But the fault lies deeper, and its new depth indicates in some ways the changes that were overtaking the age, changes sufficiently profound as to merit the desperate tone of a poet whose being is centred upon the old vision of life. The real criticism which the poem is making is, as Professor MacQueen has pointed out,[28] that the two lists describe essentially the same people, the former at their own estimation, the latter in terms of their true worth:

> ... the first catalogue presents the court, not in reality, but from the point of view, let us say, of the deluded king. Reality, as seen by Dunbar alone, is to be found in the second catalogue. The king's philosophers are in fact "ingynouris joly" and "fantastik fulis".

Again:

> The final paragraph keeps to the begging convention, but at the same time confirms the truth of the previous denunciation, and establishes that if Dunbar ever changes his tune, it will be, not because the court has improved, but because Dunbar has been corrupted.

In making this final qualification, Dunbar proves in fact that he can never be thus corrupted. He may stay silent but he will still know/

know the truth; he may fall victim to the court's glitter, but he will realize precisely what has happened to him. In short he may sin, but he will know that he is a sinner. This is ensured by the fact that he holds to the medieval vision of life based upon a "timeless order", which renders the maintenance of such delusion impossible. However,the indication in this poem and in others is that the centrality of the vision is less certain, and that general agreement about it can no longer be relied upon.

When Dunbar sins he knows that he has sinned, but in the poem he describes the emergence of something far more sinister, whereby sin establishes itself as virtue. It cannot of course be said that Dunbar sees the vast implications of what he witnesses, but on occasion his tone is close enough to the apocalyptic to suggest that he senses that society is undergoing a major change which will make an end of the world as he and his fellow makars understood it. As I have noted, Dunbar is not himself free from the standards of his society. It has to be admitted for example, that he himself was eager for a benefice, although it is clear from his poetry that if he secured one, it would be administered with spiritual conscientiousness. But the very fact that such appointments are in the hands of a "deluded king", cannot but undermine the medieval vision. The values of the court, which the poet recognizes to be corrupt, had already embarked upon that course which would culminate in the declaration of their absolute power. Dunbar could not know this, but even in its early phase, the course of events he saw to be contrary to the medieval order. To the poet a glaring sign of the times was, as the poems indicate, the ease with which the worthless gained advancement. This takes on a new and awesome perversity, when through the influence of the secular power, the worthless gain control of the church itself.

The very quarter from which one would seek the correction of temporal foibles has in fact become infiltrated by temporal authority and therefore by temporal standards. For the poet, this is typified by the elevation of the king's favourite, the charlatan Damian, to spiritual authority as a reward for his tricks.[29] As Professor MacQueen has pointed out:

> In the late sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic historian, John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, traced the origins of religious strife in Scotland to the year 1468 when James III introduced Henry Crichton as abbot of Dunfermline in place of Alexander Thomson who had been duly elected by the monks.[30]

With the continuation of this process the medieval world view could not but be eroded. It was no longer simply the existence of evil with which the old order was faced, but with its claim to represent good. In a way, the instability of Dunbar's attitudes reflects the psychological turmoil which existence in the midst of such a process must have evoked. Henryson could counter the evils of the world by reference to unchanging spiritual values. Later, Sir David Lyndsay can appeal to the temporal powers for the correction of spiritual maladies. From where Dunbar observes events, the traditional symbol of the timeless order is the church, but with the continuation of the above process the church comes to be at the very heart of the deception by which secular values are given spiritual authority. But neither can correction be sought at court which is, as "Remonstrance to the King" and several other poems show, the source of the same deception. It should be remembered that throughout Europe, this essentially political process culminated in a Reformation which was, in these terms, not the correction but the climax of church abuse, as the secular powers in various nations, Catholic as well as Protestant, asserted their spiritual authority.[31] In the face of this/

this process, the maintenance of what had been a universal vision, increasingly became a matter of personal tenacity.

The basis of Dunbar's own vision, however, remains with that of Henryson and those other poets I have mentioned in the perception of the inter-relationship of the temporal world with a "timeless order". It is this vision which, transcending as it does the specific terms of time and place, endowed the poetry with that same quality and, as such, is the bedrock upon which its achievement is founded. But the discomfort which one senses at times in the poetry of Dunbar is an indication of what was soon to come.

Loss of surety in this bedrock, rather than simply the world's failure to live up to its implications, is the fear at the heart of much of Dunbar's poetry. Such a loss would entail the diminution of that universality of utterance which marked the medieval poets. The workings of this process, can be recognized in the poetry of Sir David Lyndsay by comparison with that of his predecessors. It has often been remarked that Lyndsay was Scotland's first political poet.[32] The extent to which this is the case relates directly to the extent to which the universal vision has been lost. The movement into politics implies the poet's acceptance of factionalism, the taking of sides in a material struggle, the absence of which had been the strength of the earlier poets even, as I remarked in passing, where dealing with such partisan matters as does Barbour in his Bruce. This is not the fault of Lyndsay, but rather a sign of the changing world in which he lives. Speculation as to whether he died a Catholic or a Protestant is unimportant, which side he was on is unimportant, what matters is that this world is defined in terms of factions. The universal framework has disintegrated to such an extent that the poet can no longer express himself by reference to it. He cannot judge society by/

by rising above and beyond its terms, but rather he must remain within it and choose his faction within it, no matter what that faction happens to be. In this he differs from and is lesser than his predecessors. This is by no means to negate the worth of Lyndsay's poetry, but it does chronicle an early stage in the loss of the universal quality which had hitherto been the mark of Scottish poetry. It is not that his subject matter is radically new. In this respect I believe the equation of Lyndsay's portrayal of the clergy with his reforming sympathies is over-emphasized. There are many earlier criticisms of church abuse, several of Henryson's fables for example, which remains wholly within a medieval vision of life.[33] It is not then in his subject, but in his response to his subject, that Lyndsay differs from, for example, Henryson. As I have said, Henryson's reaction to the foibles of life sprung from his medieval view of existence, by which the temporal world was seen in relation to a permanent spiritual pattern. As long as this framework remained, a true judgement of the temporal "taill" was implicit in its relationship to the "moralitas".

It is with reference to this framework that Henryson criticizes the "Parliament of fourfuttit Beistis, haldin be the Lyoun" for its attempted subjection of the grey mare that maintains true spiritual values:

> The Meir is Men of contemplation,
> Of Pennance Walkand in the wildernes,
> As monkis and othir men of religioun
> That presis god to pleiss in everilk place.
> (1111-1114)

Henryson is complaining here of that process to which John Leslie, Bishop of Ross made reference (see note 30). That this process continued, is clearly indicated in the poetry of Dunbar. Lyndsay's work shows the extent to which, in his time, the supremacy of secular authority has approached the status of an accepted fact.

Where Henryson reviewed secular affairs in the light of the spiritual framework, Lyndsay's plea for harmony is an appeal to secular authority. The ultimate source of that authority is the crown. In "The Dreme of Schir David Lyndsay",[34] Jhone the Commoun Weill declares:

> ... thare sall na Scot have comfortyng
> Of me, tyll that I see the countre gydit
> Be wysedome of ane gude auld prudent kyng.

It could be said of course that Lyndsay seeks material solutions in that he is concerned with material problems. But, the spiritual state of the nation is also for him a material problem, one for which remedy can be sought at the court of the temporal ruler.

The fact is often quoted that King James V, on having witnessed a performance of Lyndsay's masterpiece, Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaites, threatened his bishops with the policies then being enacted by Henry VIII against the English clergy.[35] As I have noted, at the source of the church's maladies was secular interference in what should have been matters for the spiritual authorities. To Henryson, applying the vision of life of the medieval poet, this was patently obvious. Nor was this awareness restricted to a man of his insight. The author of The Thre Prestis of Peblis for example, puts a condemnation of such interference into the mouth of Master John. It is a paradox indeed, therefore, that fifty years later, Lyndsay's treatment of the same subject could prompt a monarch, albeit temporarily, to take a step which would have been for Henryson not the correction, but the culmination, of church abuse, a declaration of supremacy by the temporal power over the spiritual. Any move in this direction was a move away from the vision of existence which was at the heart of medieval life, and upon which, moreoever, the medieval poetic tradition had thrived.

Having said this, however, Lyndsay remains a major figure in/

in that tradition. He may remain for the most part, within material terms, but this hardly detracts from his essential gift, which is for comedy. It does not affect the humour and dramatic skill which marks his great achievement Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis, or the continuously interesting Squyer Meldrum, though it does impose dullness and implants - for all but the historian - the seeds of obsolescence in some of his more polemical works, for example, "The Tragedie of the Cardinall" or long sections of "Ane Dialogue betwix Experience and ane Courteour". At the most serious level, partiality and obsolescence were precluded from the work of poets such as Henryson by virtue of the eternal framework to which they related. Lyndsay's work bears witness to the gradual loss of this framework, and these limitations are an inherent feature of the new terms of social criticism which he adopts.

The other poetic direction which emerged in the reigns of Queen Mary and James VI could be seen as a corollary to the changes indicated by Lyndsay's poetry. In Henryson's work, the world had been viewed in terms beyond the particulars of time and space. With Lyndsay we see something of the disintegration of that ability, whereby the poet now deals with society by plunging into it and taking sides in its material struggles. This narrowing effect, having overtaken a poetic tradition which had sought to deal with all things in, as well as under heaven, the remaining alternative was for the poet to apply his whole vision of life to those restricted areas in which it was still pertinent. The result of this was the love poetry produced in the Scottish court in the mid-sixteenth century.[36] The insight remained, the field of action, however, had shrunk. By residing in an area essentially unaffected by the changing times, such poetry still managed to treat its subject on the highest level of thought and sensitivity.

Indeed, by reference to poets such as Alexander Scott, Alexander Montgomerie and a good many others, an impressive account of early Scottish poetry could be given, without resort to their great predecessors. Edwin Muir was speaking of these poets when he wrote that what they give us is:

> ... reflection that deals in the most imtimate way with experience from the inside, decisively modifying and enriching it. This enrichment is as good a criteria of civilization as one could find.[37]

This is true, though in the case of Alexander Scott and his poetic generation, their experience is severely limited by the circumstances in which they are placed. The love poets of the Scottish court restricted their reflections to those areas in which they remained valid. Beyond, all had become confused, and to venture beyond was to become, as did Sir David Lyndsay, part of the confusion.

These profound changes were not of course particular to Scotland. The Renaissance was marked by an eruption of political satire of which Lyndsay is a Scottish example, while the love poets of the Scottish Court certainly had many parallels in Europe.

Throughout the Continent, the vision of life as Henryson, Chaucer or Dante had known it, was rapidly clouding. However, whereas elsewhere different modes such as are indicated in the work of Lyndsay or Montgomerie re-defined the poet's role in a new, if narrower way, which could in turn pave the way for further definitions, forming a continuous tradition conscious of itself and of its past, including its medieval past, in Scotland, the period marked a decline towards a silence from which we have still to fully emerge. Alexander Scott's hope, that we might "temper time with trew continuance" (Ane New Yeir Gift to the Quene Mary), would have met with more success in virtually any other country.[38] The reasons for this, and their results, must now be considered.

PART TWO

Chapter V:
The Seventeenth Century - Elements of Decline

Towards the close of the preceding chapter, I indicated that as the sixteenth century progressed, the terms of reference employed by the Scottish poet, whether he accepted the changing times and joined in the material struggles involved as did Lyndsay, or withdrew from them as did the court poets, had narrowed, and that this narrowing paralleled the loss of the ordered universe in which their greater predecessors had existed. This loss, and its reflection in poetic terms, was common to all of western Europe at this time. In most cases, however, the shift in attitude which Lyndsay's work illustrates was the approximate extent of the decline. In Scotland by contrast, the medieval vision was to be far more drastically undermined. By this I mean that in most cases the extent of the revolution was to force a theological and philosophical compromise, whereby a recognizable tradition in these fields and by extension, in their poetic reflection, could be maintained.[1] For various reasons no such compromise was achieved in Scotland, and as a result, there remained little for poetry to reflect. We must now consider the causes of this.

There are obvious and oft-quoted features which can be cited in order to demonstrate the extreme nature of the Scottish experience at this time. In themselves they go a considerable way towards explaining the demise of the poetic tradition. As was seen in the previous chapter, that tradition was maintained by the love poets writing within the confines of the court. It was there that the work of Scott, Montgomerie and their contemporaries was produced. In another way, the court was equally important to Lyndsay. As the universal vision of Henryson, Douglas and Dunbar faded, it was to the secular power emanating from the court that Lyndsay, among others in Europe, turned in the quest/

quest for an alternative framework. Not only was this sanctuary of the tradition lost when the court moved to London in 1603, but a general process of anglicization was inaugurated (greatly assisted by the English tendencies of the reformers in language and in politics) which has continued to gather momentum almost until the present. The future for the successors of Scott and Montgomerie lay in London. In Scotland the elaborate social framework which in Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis Lyndsay had portrayed, all but disappeared. Clearly, such profound transformations in the physical life of the country could not but undermine the medieval norm and the poetry that had grown form it. On top of this, the unique extent to which the Reformation in Scotland was Calvinist in nature made for a general hostility towards the arts and an iconoclastic attitude towards the old order which severed the country from its own creative past in a way which has no parallel in Europe.

To the men of the twentieth century who set themselves the task of renewing Scottish letters, the dire effect of Calvinism upon the cultural life of the country seemed clear. That effect was to:

> ... strip the peopled field and altar bare,
> And crush the poet with an iron text.[2]

For the most part, this conclusion has been accepted by those who continue in a concern for the cultural condition of the country. Indeed, it would be difficult to disagree with the fact that in this respect the influence of Calvinism was negative. It may be possible to make a positive assessment of Scotland's Calvinist heritage in other areas, but in cultural terms such attempts remain unconvincing. Such attempts have of course been made. G G Coulton has long since illustrated that the extent to which Protestantism, including Calvinism, was responsible for the demise of medieval art is limited.[3] However, while acknowledging the achievements of the Protestant Netherlands in the field of/

of painting, it surely remains an awkward fact that the emergence of post-Reformation forms in art and in architecture is more obvious where the theological and philosophical break with the past is least extreme. This brings us back to Scotland, where the Calvinist content of the Reformation made for such extremity. The best known defence of Calvinism as it related to the arts in Scotland is that put forward by M P Ramsay.[4] There, by reference to selected extracts from the works of Calvin himself, it is suggested that while the portrayal of sacred objects was condemned, there was no objection to secular art, nor to the glorification of the presence of God in nature, and that such an art was thereby encouraged.

In making these points, Dr Ramsay sought to answer the modern tendency by which the citation of the destruction of art and architecture during the period of Reformation, and of the hostility of the Reformers to the traditional pageants of the people, leads to the general condemnation of Calvinism as the destroyer of the cultural tradition. Indeed, we might sympathize with her in this, in that the mere citing of individual historical incident has on occasion been too easily translated into a theory of blanket condemnation. We must respect both the integrity and the intelligence not only of Calvin, but of many who followed his path. I would not even seek to prove that Dr Ramsay's assertions, based as they are on Calvin's own Institutes (albeit selectively) are untrue. However, I believe that she fails to see the negative implications of what she assumes to be a positive statement.

Her own attempts to provide practical illustration of the statement, themselves arouse suspicions of some such implications. To begin with, if we are speaking of Calvinist theology at its most influential, then we are speaking of the seventeenth century.

However, of this period all that Dr Ramsay finds to dwell upon is Sir William Mure of Rowallan's "True Crucifixe for True Catholicks" (1629), which in verse form follows Calvin in condemning sacred art allowing only the portrayal of that which belongs to the material sphere. As for art itself, whatever its subject, there is little to speak about in seventeenth century Scotland and nothing that can be specifically claimed for Calvinism. Likewise, it is not through choice but of necessity that Dr Ramsay elects to omit Scottish literature from her study, as the seventeenth century was also a literary desert, the few continuing practitioners being distinctly non-Calvinist. In art as in literature, it is only in the second half of the eighteenth century that substantial practical examples emerge, and while the tone of that art and literature is indeed secular, and while agreeing moreover that Calvinism was the essential factor in setting that tone, I would dispute the fact that the relationship between Scottish Calvinist spirituality and the secularity of the creative achievement of the eighteenth century was positive. There is no indication of any such creativity co-existing with that spirituality in its strength. The best that Dr Ramsay can do in arguing for some such co-existence is to culminate her study with an extract from a sermon of Richard Cameron, the founder of the Cameronians, in which he stresses the presence of God in nature. However, while this may produce an effective sermon, it is hardly unique to Calvinism, and it is certainly an insufficient proof of an over all benign and fruitful inter-relationship between Calvinism and art in Scotland.

One cannot avoid the suspicion that a fundamental problem remains, and it is only increased by Dr Ramsay's earnest and honest attempts to combat it. In her honesty, she seeks through historical fact to counter those other and likewise honest statements of historical fact of a type/

type less flattering to the Reformers, which have set the anti-Calvinist tone of modern Scotland. In doing so, while she goes some way towards defending the intentions of the Calvinists in relation to art, there is little she can say to convince us that in practice there does not exist an undefined hostility between the two. Neither, however, is the essential nature of this hostility revealed in the condemnations of those whom Dr Ramsay seeks to answer.

The problem is that the citation of historical facts, both in relation to Calvinism and to the Union of Crowns, are insufficient in themselves in explaining the fundamental shift in consciousness at the heart of the process whereby the life and literature of late medieval Scotland were profoundly and permanently altered. Just as we had to look beyond the concrete features of the late Middle Ages in order to discover the consciousness upon which its life and poetry was based, so we must seek the implications of the historical facts so that we might ascertain why, and in what manner, this consciousness was altered. I have sought to illustrate the source of the medieval poetic tradition beyond the material factors which marked the period. If we seek the cause of the demise of that tradition, we must likewise go beyond the material aspects of the process, its demise being essentially the demise of the source from which it sprung.

Identity and its loss is quite clearly at the heart of the matter. The universal vision of the Middle Ages was eroded by the break-up of medieval Christendom as the emerging nation states claimed spiritual as well as secular authority. However, while undermining the wider identity of medieval man, this essentially political feature of the Reformation era did, in the very act of pulling down the edifice of universalism, erect a nation-based substitute. In most cases, in England for example, and equally in Catholic France and Spain, the/

the spiritual life of the country came to be defined in national terms.[5] Clearly, the effect of these events upon the medieval religious vision must have involved a narrowing process which was more than simply geographical. The establishment of national churches could not but undermine the concept of universality in terms of space, and also, since the past was now held in error and the future lay in the subjection of the spiritual to a material and therefore temporal faction, in terms of time. As I have said, however, the process did simultaneously raise a new if lesser unit of identity. Moreover, where this political take-over was the paramount issue, the forms and symbols of medieval religion survived to a sufficient extent for there to remain some spiritual empathy both with the past and with the rest of divided Christendom. Thus the nation state, the political idea which had destroyed the old framework, itself provided an increasingly recognizable, if morally dubious, substitute, and where this political imposition was the essential feature of reform, the conduct of religion proper still related to past tradition to a degree whereby a spiritual continuity, and therefore a poetic continuity could be maintained.

Society and therefore the poet in society faced a crisis. Out of the ruins of the old order he had to re-define the framework within which he existed, and of it through his work achieve a harmony. Crisis and re-definition is a central feature of the literature that the period produced. Variously, the works of Rabelais and Montaigne, of Cervantes and Shakespeare, are shot through with the feeling that something better than is now known has been lost. But there is also re-definition. Shakespeare's histories, for example, are far more than a loyal subject's assessment of his country's past to the greater glory of the status quo. The medieval framework through which/

which Henryson, Chaucer and Dante sought to compose a universal harmony had faded. It had been displaced by a national hierarchy, embracing the spiritual as well as the secular, at the pinnacle of which sat the monarchy. Like others of the period, Shakespeare was conscious that a loss was involved, but also of the need to establish the moral legitimacy of the substituted framework, that a concord in life and in poetry might still be achieved. However, I have described the situation beyond the Scottish border elsewhere. All that needs to be said at present is that the effects of the Reformation era were felt throughout Europe, and that a re-definition of identity was the lot of European man. Scotland's peculiar tragedy was that her history ran quite contrary to the main features of this process, as a result of which identity was not so much re-defined as destroyed.

The universal framework of medieval man was lost, although elsewhere, as I have indicated, identity was re-constituted in national terms. As we saw towards the close of the previous chapter, Scotland shared in this general European experience. Lyndsay's poetry reflects that stage in the process at which events in Scotland could be said to equate with the modification of vision undergone throughout western Europe. Scotland is unique however, in that the institutions to which Lyndsay sought to relate were in turn to be removed. Far from coinciding with the fuller emergence of nationhood, which given the loss of universal vision would have provided an alternative, if lesser unit of identity, the post-Reformation period in fact witnessed the disintegration of nationhood. The substitute failed to materialize, and indeed was deprived of its pre-Reformation stature.

Now I have indicated that the principal means by which the nation state came to be elevated in this period was in the assumption of spiritual authority. As a result, in those countries in which/

which this process took place, national and spiritual life became intrinsically linked. Where this happened, however, the essential properties of the nationalized religion bore a sufficient resemblance to the past for some spiritual link with older tradition and with the rest of divided Christendom to be maintained.[6] In Scotland, by contrast, a corollary of the failure of nationhood was the consequent absence of a climate conducive to the emergence of a reformed religion which would thus "temper time with trew continuance". Indeed, the loss of nationhood, and it simultaneous assertion elsewhere, went far towards determining that it would be otherwise.

Scottish poetry and the vision of life from which it grew is the main concern of this study. If actuality were as absolute as abstract theory, there would be nothing to discuss in the context of seventeenth century Scotland, when the adverse conditions I have suggested were most immediate and most powerful. This is not of course the case. Despite this qualification, however, what creative expression there was does, in the course of that century, coincide with the theory.

What literature of note was produced in seventeenth century Scotland sought to continue within the recently established but even more recently removed national framework by proxy. Throughout Europe, the attempt to formalize this framework took place mainly in the emerging fields of prose, and of the drama of which Lyndsay's Satyre is an example. On a similarly widespread basis, poetry itself tended to withdraw to those areas in which it could continue undisturbed, as did the love poets of the last Scottish court. Being for the most part poetic, the literature produced in seventeenth century Scotland maintained this tendency. In the Scottish case, however, the need for poetic retreat was multiplied by the fact that the removal of/

of the court to London undermined the possibilities of re-definition by its absence, by the complexities and contradictions attendant upon the partial Union with England, and by the increased propensity to chaos within Scotland which these factors facilitated.

The survival of a national framework was crucial to the survival of a cultural tradition. Not surprisingly then the poets of seventeenth century Scotland for the most part sought to adhere to that framework. Simultaneously, however, they are illustrative of the fact that their position is increasingly embattled. Thus, in religion they are Episcopalian, which in Scottish terms was the spiritual expression of the nation-based, monarchy-centred structure variously established throughout western Europe in the Reformation period. But in the context of Scotland, deprived as it now was of the internal expressions of the structure, its continuing validity was increasingly open to dispute. As a result, the tendency towards poetic withdrawal was greatly augmented, not only in terms of subject, but also in terms of the language employed. Thus a major poetic feature of the period was the Latin verse of exceptional quality produced in the Episcopalian stronghold of Aberdeen. Deriving as it did from the renewed respect for classicism which marked the Renaissance, such poetry is itself to an inevitable degree derivative. Nevertheless, of its kind it is highly accomplished, and in the hands of the finest practitioner, Arthur Johnston, it achieves a degree of individuality which gives seventeenth century Aberdeen an honoured place in any account of European Latin poetry of the period.[7]

In another direction, Scotland's finest non-Latin poet of the seventeenth century, William Drummond of Hawthornden, elected to write in English.[8] In contrast with his chosen language, however, Drummond's models are distinctively European. That this factor/

factor caused him to be judged out of the mainstream of British poetry, is an early indicator of the cultural disadvantages of a closer relationship with England. Most of Drummond's best work is to be found in the sonnets and madrigals of love brought out as Poems in 1616, and in the spiritual pieces contained in Flowers of Sion of 1623. As a recent editor, Robert H MacDonald has indicated, the two collections are best regarded "as two parts of a whole, designed as such and to be read as such."[9] In this they express as a body the neo-Platonic concept viewing human love as a shadow of the divine. On occasion also, the concept is contained within the single poem. Centring on such themes, Drummond was continuing in the tradition begun in Italy and carried on in the poetry of Ronsard and others of the Pléiade. He does so, however, with considerable grace and originality:

> That learned Graecian (who did excell
> In Knowledge passing Sense, that hee is nam'd
> Of all the after-Worlds Divine) doth tell,
> That at the Time when first our Soules are fram'd,
> Ere in these Mansions blinde they come to dwell,
> They live bright Rayes of that Eternall Light,
> And others see, know, love, in Heavens great Hight,
> Not Toylde to ought to Reason doth rebell;
> Most true it is, for straight at the first Sight
> My Minde mee told, that in some other Place
> It elsewhere saw the Idea of that Face,
> And lov'd a Love of heavenly pure Delight.
> No Wonder now I feele so faire a Flame,
> Sith I her lov'd ere on this Earth shee came.[10]

Thus, Drummond's poetry maintains a relationship between world and spirit, a concern for "knowledge passing sense." To do so however not only must he rely upon foreign models, he must also seek expression in a foreign language. Internally, the general tenor of Scottish life had ceased to be conducive to such a concept and so, consequently, had the Scots language.

With Drummond, and with the Latinists of Aberdeen, we arrive at the final expression of the learned and courtly tradition in Scottish/

Scottish poetry, and the manner in which they differ from their predecessors is indicative of the causes of this finality. In his library in Hawthornden, Drummond absorbed the influences of Europe and found companionship in his correspondence with the poets of the English court. In Aberdeen, Johnston and his circle likewise pursued their European interests, in an atmosphere temporarily spared the convulsions taking place further south. There is no doubting the patriotism of these men. By remaining at home and writing their poetry in Scotland, by their Episcopalianism, by the content and language of their poetry, they sought to maintain a framework through which the semblance of a harmony might still uphold Scottish life and culture. Outwith the poet's libary that life was becoming increasingly chaotic, and the language which expressed it was becoming increasingly strident, notably in the mouths of the divines most frantically at odds with the harmony which the poet sought to maintain. In such circumstances we may regret the fact, but we must understand the reasons why the poet thought it necessary to uphold that harmony politically, thematically and linguistically in an extra-Scottish context.

Given the condition of seventeenth century Scotland, it would have been difficult for them to do otherwise, as a multiplicity of circumstances were denying the possibility of the maintenance of a purely Scottish framework. Nonetheless, one can readily see the inherent weakness of their position with regard to the survival of a Scottish tradition. In as much as they wrote a poetry which sought to relate world and spirit, they continued that tradition. But in all those aspects which I have indicated, by which they are distinguished from their predecessors in that tradition, they signalled its conclusion as an innately Scottish accomplishment.

The effort to maintain a Scottish identity in life and in letters by reference to a framework centred elsewhere, and relying heavily for that continuity upon the continuity of the House of Stewart, was one which time rendered less and less viable. Poetically, Drummond provides its last major expression. More generally, it was variously weakened by the execution of Charles I in 1649, the Revolution of 1688, and the several Jacobite risings which preceded its final extinction at Culloden and in its aftermath.[11]

With the possible exception of England where, despite upheaval, a process of general expansion seemed to verify divine approval of the national framework which the Reformation asserted, the seventeenth century was not a great age of European poetry. As I have said, subsequent to the demise of a universal vision of life, it was essentially a period of withdrawal and re-appraisal. The poetry of seventeenth century Scotland complied with this trend, but given that the unit of re-appraisal, the nation state was, in a Scottish context, in the process of disintegration, they could do so only by appeal to an external framework. Notwithstanding the integrity, indeed the inevitability of their course, it was one which was ultimately incompatible with the survival of the Scottish poetic tradition. As a result they provide not a re-appraisal of that tradition, but its epilogue. The poets of seventeenth century Scotland concluded that a vestige of Scottish identity could be maintained only in the context of a wider political framework. While this may be regrettable, we must recognize the extent to which it was dictated by circumstances. This was so not only in the positive sense, that is by the Union of Crowns and all that it entailed, but also in the face of the negativity within Scotland consequent upon these events. Internally, the Scottish identity which had suffered the collapse of a universal framework/

framework and of a national framework in turn, was in a condition conducive to nothing other than further implosion. We must now examine the nature of that condition.

The peculiar direction in which the Scottish Reformation moved was greatly abetted by the temporal void left by the simultaneous and unique loss of nationhood. To begin with, and at a fairly obvious level, the extent to which traditional religious forms had elsewhere been carried over into the ceremony of the post-Reformation nationalized churches, was the extent to which they had come to be identified with national interests. Perhaps we should bear in mind therefore, the fact that for the de-nationalized Scot, such religious forms were bound to be seen as being representative of the infiltration of various foreign causes. Given that throughout Europe the relationship between religion and the state had become intimate, it is understandable in the face of the disintegration of Scottish nationhood that Catholicism should come to be seen by the Scot as being representative of European, and in particular French, interests,[12] while the reaction against Episcopacy no doubt reflected suspicion of its affinities with the Anglican church, and therefore the interests of the English.[13] In this respect, events elsewhere helped to determine the direction which the Reformation in Scotland would take. But the absence of similar events in Scotland, the fact that the period witnessed, not the emergence of nationhood, but its loss, further influenced the matter on a more profound level.

The forms and symbols of medieval religion, which in other countries were to a considerable extent carried over into the post-Reformation era, were the means by which the human community, formerly on a universal, now on a national basis, related to and was reconciled with its God. When community, not only on the former level but also on the latter, is denied to a people, that is to say when identity is denied/

denied them, then these forms and symbols will lose all meaning for them. Perhaps the consideration of these circumstances will help to explain why Calvinism, which dismissed the intermediary functions of other churches as unnecessary and asserted the direct relationship between the individual and his God, found fertile soil in Scotland. It is a development which parallels the loss of identity beyond individuality.[14]

Thus, subsequent to the break-up of the medieval order, the Scottish identity was further undermined by the loss of the nationhood which elsewhere replaced that order. Largely as a corollary of this circumstance, the central tenets of the religion which came to dominate post-Reformation Scottish life, by dismissing the means of reconciliation and asserting the justification of the individual, in effect established an inherent source of division, and therefore an immensely powerful barrier against the rediscovery of identity. Not only does the elevation of the individual isolate the individual from his world, but on an even more fundamental level, the rejection of the means of reconciliation is a denial of the principle through which world and spirit can find accord within the individual consciousness, which is to condemn that consciousness to its own internal division. This is destructive of identity on the most profound level. From our earlier investigations of the principle upon which the poetic achievement of late medieval Scotland was based, it follows that the fate of the identity and that of the poetry are closely related.

The essential feature of that achievement was, as I sought to illustrate, its existence in a universe in which every human life related to an eternal and unchanging framework. By these terms the life of man is basically the same at any time and in every place. It was in the presence of this assumption that the creative writer was/

was enabled to speak with a voice which likewise overcame the restrictions of time and place, and it was thus the source of the lasting expression which the poetry of medieval Scotland attained. In studying that period and its poets, particularly, as the one most conscious of the workings of his universe, Robert Henryson, I indicated the function which such a vision of existence bestowed upon them. That function lay in the reconciliation of the vagaries of human life with the timeless truth which the framework established. Within the medieval order, the actuality of human existence was seen as an ebb and flow between the digressions of the "taill" and the verity of the "moralitas". Human nature was in itself incapable of a perfection which would not waver from the values of the "moralitas". But this imperfection was brought into relationship with the eternal by the compensatory events upon which Christianity is based. As a result, imperfect man could maintain this relationship and the "taill" of his temporal life could be reconciled with the terms of the "moralitas" by the "imitation of Christ" through which his imperfection was redeemed.

Such was the vision of existence which was undermined throughout western Europe in the period of Renaissance and Reformation. It had supplied man with an identity in the widest sense, beyond time and place, which he has never known fully since, and it gave to the creative artist the task of expounding and celebrating that identity. Thus, in undermining the vision, the poetic imagination too was undermined. Whereas elsewhere this process was partial, however, and a recognizable tradition with the past maintained, in Scotland the failure of nationhood deprived the country of the conditions in which the total disintegration of the old order might have been avoided, and a recognizable cultural tradition likewise maintained. In the absence of such conditions, what in fact emerged as the overwhelming influence/

influence upon Scottish life, was a religious form which by its nature struck at the heart of that order, and therefore at the heart of the poetic imagination, and the Scottish cultural tradition.

The core of the old order was, as I have termed it, a principle of reconciliation founded upon, and validated by, the redemptive events of the New Testament. Essentially, the forms, symbols and the sacraments of the medieval church were an expression of these events and of this principle. In the Reformation period, the universality of that church was eroded as it was subjected to various national definitions. However, in essence - although its interpretation in national terms must at times have been torturous - these churches continued to reflect the same events and the same principle. In denationalized Scotland, however, opposition to every vestige of the old church, which in effect meant the rejection of the concept of mediation which its ritual embodied, and a reliance instead upon the individual's relationship with his God, resulted, no doubt unwittingly, in the negation to a considerable degree of the events of the New Testament, and of the principle which those events established.

Now these events were, as Henryson and his age realized, a precise response to the inability of humanity to live up to its own spiritual ideal. "The Annunciation" took place in order to dispel the spiritual hopelessness of the world of Orpheus and Eurydice. In rejecting the forms and symbols which reflected this reconciliation, that is in rejecting the concept of mediation, and in acknowledging instead an omnipotent God who cannot be petitioned, the Scottish Calvinists inaugurated a drift back towards a spiritual climate akin to that with which Orpheus was faced. This is not to denigrate the intentions of the Reformers. Indeed, the extent of their piety is attested by the fact that they submitted themselves to a theology/

theology which demanded nothing less than perfection. The mistake lay in the failure to recognize the fact of human imperfection. Thus, in dismissing the good works or charity by which other Christians in effect sought to reflect the selfless love of the redemption, and thereby share in it, in favour of justification by faith alone, it was inevitable that the God to whom the Reformers turned would develop a nature closer to that of the Judaic Jehovah than to the Christ who came for no other reason than to redeem just such a situation.[15]

The result of this was a reversion to a state of affairs in which world and spirit remained irreconcilable. The unity of the Moral Fable was shattered, "taill" and "moralitas" became mutually incompatible, and man was left to live his life either by the terms of the one or of the other. In reality it was impossible in an Orphean landscape from which reconciliation had been erased, to live up to the terms of the "moralitas". The consequent despair was, it will be recalled, described by Matthew P McDiarmid in his interpretation of Henryson's The Preiching of the Swallow and The Taill of the Paddok and the Mous.[16] On that occasion, as I sought to show, such an analysis was quite mistaken. Mr McDiarmid failed to take account of the principle of reconciliation which rendered Henryson's conception of the relationship between human and divine fundamentally different from that which emerged in the post-Reformation period with such profound effect that it continues to obscure the medieval vision from the twentieth century critic. In the period now under discussion, however, the spiritual anguish which Mr McDiarmid describes had in fact evolved, but it had evolved as a result of the rejection of that principle through which, for Henryson and his age, redemption was the proper end for all humanity.

The loss of this principle amounted to the loss of the means by which the world and the spirit might be brought into a workable/

workable relationship. In its absence, an insurmountable dichotomy remained between the actual and the ideal. Without the means of reconciliation, human fallibility must render any honest assessment of man's spiritual condition grim indeed. This should be kept in mind when one considers the fact that modern accounts of Calvinist Scotland invariably include the charge of hypocrisy. The conditions that I have outlined at least render such hypocrisy understandable. It is not of course a legitimate substitute for reconciliation, but in the absence of that principle, and in the presence of human frailty, it was the only way in which world and spirit could co-exist. So it was that, by personal interpretation of the doctrine of predestination the adoption of double standards was facilitated, whereby the elect could suffer the pleasures of the world while remaining assured of their spiritual worth.[17]

The severity of the conditions which I have described are such as to distinguish them and their effects upon the Scottish consciousness, from the changes wrought elsewhere in the Reformation period. Throughout Europe the universal vision of the medieval man narrowed. But this did not in itself destroy the principle upon which that vision was founded. Scotland experienced not a narrowing of vision, but a denial of the principle from which it sprung. Consequently, the means by which man might reconcile his material and his spiritual being was eradicated. Spirit and world came to be divided absolutely. Given that in reality a life at one with the spiritual ideal is impossible, one result of this was that tradition of contradiction to which such characters as Holy Willie, Robert Wringhim and Dr Jekyll bear witness.

Clearly, the adverse effects of the psychological climate which I have described upon any sense of identity would be profound.

At the fundamental level, the reconciliation of the individual consciousness was denied, which is to impose division upon that consciousness. All else follows, or rather fails to follow from this. The older order, being based upon the reconciliation of the spiritual and the worldly facets of the individual consciousness, not only maintained the oneness of that consciousness, but by its nature generated the wider reconciliation springing from a recognition of a level of identity common to all individuals. Obviously, in practice evil must be taken into account, but we are considering the benefits of the principle and the consequences of its loss. Essentially these seem to be that an order based upon reconciliation generates reconciliation, but when this principle is lost sight of, there remains only division, beginning at the level of the individual consciousness and producing, if anything at all, further fragmentation.

As I have indicated, the effect of such pressures upon the Scottish identity is closely related to their effect upon the Scottish poetic tradition. A comparison between the conditions which I have just described and that vision of life which nurtured the work of the medieval poet will make this obvious. His function, the relationship of human existence to the wider framework with which it had been reconciled, died with the principle upon which it was founded. This quite simply is the reason for the sudden silence of what had been a poetic tradition of the highest order. The intermediary role which poetry had played was declared heretical, and where it had existed there now remained only a void separating an invisible and arbitrary God from an isolated, and thus wholly material world. Of such a God there was nothing for poetry to say beyond the poetry of the Bible. Such a world continued throughout to produce a popular poetry in the tradition of Christis Kirk on the Green, but thus isolated, the poetry,/

poetry, like the world from which it grew, was incapable of relating to anything beyond itself. Moreoever, given these same conditions, of necessity it would be from this same material tradition that any subsequent revival of Scottish culture would emerge.[18] In answer to M P Ramsay it is, I would suggest, in this negative sense that Calvinism relates to the emergence of a secular culture.

In this chapter I have sought to indicate the uniqueness of the Reformation period in Scotland. That uniqueness lay in the extent to which the totality of the forces then at work was destructive of the country's identity, and by extension of its culture. But beyond the physical expressions of this destruction, its essence lay in the loss of the means by which world and spirit could be reconciled, the converse of which was the establishment of a divided consciousness. This is destructive of identity on the most primary level. Indeed, it destroys the very principle upon which identity is founded, creating an unbridgeable divide between the spiritual and the material poles of existence, thereby precluding the possibility of making of that existence a manageable whole. The Scottish Calvinist desire to build God's kingdom on earth was in its own way heroic. It failed however to take account of human imperfection and in its fervour destroyed the means through which that imperfection had been catered for. In such a situation, with the inevitable lapse of fervour, and in the absence of the double standards which, as I have indicated, the situation promoted, man was left marooned upon the material side of the divide.

It was among such as these that the matter of Scottish identity was to be raised afresh and a revival of Scottish culture attempted. However, the processes examined in this chapter precluded the resurrection of the tradition which had existed before those processes took effect. Clearly the transformations which have been discussed/

discussed here were of such a fundamental nature as to dictate precisely the directions and limitations of any subsequent revival of the life and culture of the country. This will be seen as we consider the achievements of eighteenth century Scotland.

Chapter VI:
The Eighteenth Century Revival

Section (a)

With the Revolution which saw the removal of James VII and the arrival of William and Mary, the pre-eminence of the Presbyterian influence upon the Scottish character was underlined by official recognition. However, quite apart from the moderating effect which - in terms of the present study - lingering Episcopalianism, and to a lesser extent Catholicism maintained, the absolutism of Calvinist theology was, in the course of the eighteenth century, called into question by elements within the Presbyterian system itself. Out of an atmosphere which was becoming increasingly tolerant and moderate, a concern for Scottish culture was also renewed. However, the psychological pressures of the preceding era were of such an intensity as to qualify profoundly the nature of any subsequent revival.

Within the Kirk, the eighteenth century saw the emergence of the New Light party, as opposed to the Auld Lights who adhered strictly to traditional Calvinism. The character of the new movement can be gleaned from the following description of two of its foremost pioneers:

> In Scotland the reaction against the austerity of Calvinism set in with the rise of rationalism towards the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The revival of religious enquiry was begun cautiously by John Simpson, Professor of Theology at Glasgow University between 1708 and 1729. Complaints were made to the General Assembly by ecclesiastic courts concerning his teaching, in the metaphysical subtleties of which, it was said, lurked serious heresies. For about fifteen years it was the subject of endless argument, until ultimately the Assembly, after a very dilatory investigation of the matter, arrived at a decision so indulgent towards the professor that it was one of the principal causes of the great secession of 1733.

> But the man we are more concerned with here, the man who directly influenced the Ayrshire New Light ministers, (the present extract is from a study of Burns) is Hutcheson, who succeeded Simpson. He is said to have been affable, affectionate, charming in conversation and the first to use the English language in his lectures. Discarding the old theological dogmas, he turned to reason to discover the rules of conduct, and in opposition to the Calvinist theory of human nature, he maintained that man was naturally benevolent, having a moral sense which he should regard as his supreme authority. This was something new in Scotland. He identified virtue with universal benevolence and in the tendency towards general happiness he found the standard of goodness; thus anticipating the Utilitarians in their doctrine of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number."[1]

The emergence of such life enhancing attitudes within the Kirk itself, the idea that the divine plan was ultimately accomplishing the salvation of humanity, and that humanity could actively co-operate with that plan, provided a much needed liberation from the spiritual despair which traditional Calvinism evoked in all but those possessed of sufficient self-deception as to be convinced of personal election. It should be realized however, that within the total framework of the Scottish consciousness, moderation is not a term applicable to these developments. "Universal benevolence" is not a concept which can grow out of the traditional Calvinist assertion of universal reprobation, nor can the associated belief that man's salvation rests upon his exercise of "moral sense" co-exist with the doctrine of predestination, upon which, for the Calvinist, salvation and damnation was decided. The absolutism of Calvinist spirituality precluded re-appraisal, and the ideas which the New Lights promoted were entirely foreign to the traditional theology of the Kirk.

As I have described it, the essential factor which distinguishes post-Reformation Scotland lies in the loss of the reconciliatory principle, and the dichotomy between world and spirit which this loss/

loss created. In the Scotland of the eighteenth century therefore, the New Lights faced an atmosphere devoid of any reconciliatory theology. On the contrary, and as a result, there existed a regimen of spiritual absolutism which allowed for no deviation. In effect therefore, the attitudes which the New Lights evolved could have no spiritual foundation, and indeed, as the preceding extract indicates they found their basis rather, in the rationalism of the age. The disjunction between world and spirit which Calvinist theology created, ensured that in any subsequent definition of existence, corroboration would have to be sought in opposition to the spirit as that theology defined it, that is to say in the material world itself:

> In short, Protestantism tried to diffuse religion through every aspect of life and, by the same token, to treat all life as an aspect of the life religious ..... The natural consequence of this, given human needs and tastes, was not so much to sanctify the world as to personalise and secularise religion.[2]

Here G R Elton is speaking of Protestantism in general, and first and foremost he is referring to the effects of the teaching of Martin Luther. The fundamental doctrines which distinguish Calvinism, reprobation and predestination, in fact multiply this effect, in that they are absolute and it is a result of absolutism. This result was not of course intended by the New Lights, who were themselves theologians. They sought to combat the life denying creed of Calvinism where Calvinism had obliterated the theological means, and instead they found support in the positive intellectual atmosphere of the eighteenth century. Essentially, however, this was to rely upon a secular definition. In the atmosphere of the eighteenth century this may have suggested a benevolent divinity, but in the course of time it would increasingly challenge all/

all religious beliefs, leaving the Scot with little option but to succumb entirely to materialism, other than to deny reason and revert to fundamentalism.

Such developments we will return to in considering the nineteenth century. The period we are at present concerned with saw a reaction against traditional Calvinism, but the dichotomy which traditional Calvinism had created ensured that this reaction would in fact constitute a drift towards secularism. In the atmosphere which these developments produced, the cultural life of the country was re-awakened. However, the working of the poetic imagination was qualified by this same restriction which marked the post-Calvinist consciousness. Before considering the central figures in the eighteenth century revival, I must make mention of a parallel process which had been taking place since first the Scottish consciousness, and with it the poetic imagination, had begun to be eroded. Here I refer to the tendency to take the road to London, either literally or in terms of attitudes, which this disintegration prompted. In the latter sense the process was as we have already seen, given early expression in the language of William Drummond of Hawthornden. In the period now under discussion it attained its highest achievement in the poetry of James Thomson, who early in his career opted for a life in the English capital.[3]

There were many and varied practical considerations prompting such a course. Basically, it can be explained by citing the historical factors through which nationhood, and therefore cultural autonomy were being diluted in direct proportion to the increasing influence of England over Scottish affairs. However, as I sought to point out in relation to Drummond, the internal condition of Scotland, and the disjunction between that condition and the needs of the poet, provide deep-rooted reasons for the process beyond the natural pull of a more/

more powerful neighbour. The fragmentation which had come to afflict the Scottish consciousness in the Reformation period was by definition inimical to the poetic imagination. Given this, the move to the south can be understood as an expression of the poet's necessary search for the sense of identity, the possibility of wholeness, which the English nation had preserved - albeit universality had to a large extent metamorphosed into Englishness - and in which, it seemed fair to hope, all the citizenry of Great Britain would find some share.

Mary Jane Scott is at pains to emphasize that this "North Britishness" is the most accurate cultural category in which to place the poetry of James Thomson. However, in her admirable thesis, Dr Scott seeks to balance the assumption that Thomson is an English poet by illustrating the extent to which his work is influenced by his Scottish background.[4] The evidence of such influence is considerable. Centrally, there are many respects in which the poet of The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence recalls a Scottish tradition of landscape poetry including Montgomerie's The Cherrie and the Slae and Alexander Hume's "Of the Day of Estivall", reaching its zenith in Douglas's Eneados, and foreshadowed by Henryson in some of the Fables such as The Preiching of the Swallow, and in parts of the Testament of Cresseid. Of more vital interest to the present discussion, however, are the religious attitudes which Thomson's poetry displays, attitudes which Dr Scott likewise returns to the Scottish context. Essentially, she describes Thomson's religious progress as taking him from an early fear of a wrathful God to the contemplation of the benevolent creator that his mature poetry celebrates, to a religious position in fact at one with the "moderate" party in Scotland. This indeed would seem to parallel the direction of events in Scotland, and it is rightly placed in relation to that background. The only qualification I would make/

make is to point out that in his latter stance, Thomson shares with the progressives in Scotland an evolution of opinions which, far from being based upon the Calvinist tradition are a total contradiction of that tradition encouraged by factors completely foreign to it. In this, the geographical distance which Thomson set between himself and his Calvinist background would perhaps increase his chances of successfully achieving such a psychological inversion. However, as Dr Scott has it, his confidence in ultimate benevolence is never as thorough going as that of his English contemporaries, and the dark shadow of a wrathful God is not wholly eradicated.

There were of course more obvious problems involved on top of this for those who took the North British option. For the eighteenth century Scot, English was essentially a foreign language. The degree to which Thomson succeeded poetically was perhaps assisted by the fact that the level of artificiality which in any case marked the poetry of Augustan England mitigated the more fundamental causes of linguistic formality which affected the Scot. Nonetheless, Thomson's language at times betrays the strain, and as poetry sought to adopt a more natural mode of expression, the problems for those of his compatriots seeking to write in English were multiplied.

Clearly then, the hopes implied in the courses taken by such as Drummond and Thomson involved their own limitations. The basic division of the Scottish consciousness which Calvinism had imposed, could not be answered simply by the adoption of a foreign identity, a term which is itself something of an oxymoron in the present context. Nevertheless, the Scottish condition at the same time explains why some thought it necessary to make the attempt.[5] That they did so is of course in some ways a matter for regret, representing as it does squandered potential in terms of a truly Scottish cultural revival.

The alternative was to remain at home and to be faced with the heightened disadvantages which that choice involved. Fortunately, that choice was taken up by poets of great ability. But as with the Anglo-Scottish poets, indeed more directly, the achievements and limitations of Fergusson and Burns were dictated by the peculiarities of the consciousness which they inherited.

Before turning to these poets, acknowledgement must be made of the debt which is due to the great pioneering work undertaken by Allan Ramsay.[6] A contemporary of Thomson, although a lesser poet, Ramsay's influence upon a truly Scottish poetic revival was nonetheless immense. Symbolic of Ramsay's part in that revival, a revival which defied the lure of anglicization, was the publication of his Evergreen, a collection of poetry written before 1660, in 1724. In the process Ramsay expanded and consolidated the work begun by James Watson whose Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems[7] had appeared in parts in 1706, 1709 and 1711. Unlike Watson, Ramsay had access to the Bannatyne Manuscript, and while he included some unfortunate alterations and additions, the Evergreen re-introduced to a Scottish public some Henryson, and a good deal of Dunbar, Scott and Montgomerie, as well as some of their more shadowy contemporaries. Of these, only Montgomerie's The Cherrie and the Slae had remained current throughout the troubled seventeenth century.[8] The two volumes also contain popular poems of the Christis Kirk on the Green tradition, which had remained the property of the common people, but which was thus released to a wider audience eager to preserve something of its Scottish identity. Similarly, The Tea-Table Miscellany, a four volume collection of Scots songs, had a wide popularizing effect.[9]

The great majority of Ramsay's original poetry sought to emulate/

emulate the language and attitude of the English Augustans, and as with Fergusson and Burns, the attempt is almost always a regrettable misapplication of energy. His poetry in Scots however is perhaps under-rated, both with regard to its intrinsic merit, and to its influence over the greater poets who were to follow. The latter can be seen in the poetic modes adopted in such pieces as his "Familiar Epistles" or "The Twa Books",[10] while the former, which is itself a bequest to his successors, can be witnessed in many of the Scots pieces:

> Three times the carline grain'd and rifted,
> Then frae the cod her pow she lifted,
> In bawdy policy well gifted,
> When She now fan
> That death nae longer wad be shifted,
> She thus began:
>
> 'My loving lasses, I maun leave ye:
> But dinna wi' your greeting grieve me,
> Nor wi your draunts and droning deave me,
> But bring's a gill:
> For faith, my bairns, ye may believe me,
> Tis' 'gainst my will!
> (from "Lucky Spence's Last Advice")[11]

More than anyone else, Ramsay was responsible for renewing in the Scottish mind the fact that there was such a thing as a native Scottish culture. Fergusson and Burns responded on the level of genius to ensure that it continued to be a fact. However, while they both excelled Ramsay, the qualification which I would apply to his poetry pertains also to them, indeed it expresses in terms of the poetic imagination the debilitation that Calvinism bequeathed to post-Calvinist Scotland. As an editor, Ramsay may have resurrected something of the achievement of the medieval poets. However, the disjunction between world and spirit which Calvinism had effected, dictated that his own poetry would find its roots, not in the reconciliatory vision of the Makars, but in the celebrations of the/

the everyday world that the popular tradition maintained.[12]

I have suggested that the overwhelming influence which distinguished post-Reformation Scotland was that of the Calvinist Kirk, and the unique effect of Calvinist theology lay in the dichotomy which it created between world and spirit. This division destroyed the principle upon which the medieval poetic achievement was founded, so much so that if we seek the remnants of that achievement in seventeenth century Scotland, we must look to the private library in which Douglas's Eneados might still be read, and in which, drawing upon their Episcopalian interpretation of Scotland and of Britain, Drummond and the latinists of Aberdeen struggled to preserve something of a continuity in poetry and in life. The dawn of the eighteenth century saw the triumph of Presbyterianism, although the most severe period of Calvinist influence was in fact nearing its close. However, as I have indicated at the start of this chapter, Calvinism profoundly affected the nature of post-Calvinist Scotland. Auld Light theology, which created the dichotomy between world and spirit denied any spiritual basis within their own religious tradition to the Scotland of the New Lights. This is itself an expression of the absence of reconciliation, an absence which, recalling the nature of the medieval poets, must profoundly affect the poetic imagination.

For those brought up in the Calvinist tradition there was, while the absolute spirituality of that tradition held sway, nothing for poetry to say beyond the reiteration of biblical truth. As we have seen, Scottish poetry in the seventeenth century was by and large Episcopalian. It should be further recalled that it was largely written in languages other than Scots, and that the above mentioned circumstance is indicative of an atmosphere detrimental to the range of the Scottish language above and beyond the oft-quoted, and indeed/

indeed regrettable fact that the Reformed Bible was written in English. In the increasingly tolerant Scotland of the eighteenth century, a great revival of Scottish poetry took place. It should be noted that the poets who effected this revival were themselves both deeply imbued with the Calvinist tradition, and with the exception of Thomson, seeking to write in Scots. These circumstances not only denied the reconciliatory principle upon which medieval poetry had been based, but ensured that their efforts at reconstruction, like those of the New Light theologians, would entirely contradict their own religious background. Psychologically, therefore, the poets of the revival had recourse only to the popular poetry which, for the same psychological reasons, was the only poetry to have survived the conditions of the seventeenth century.

Pre-Reformation poetry had not of course died out entirely. The Cherrie and the Slae remained popular, and its stanza form was copied. Likewise, the structure used by Sir Robert Sempill of Beltrees in his "The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan", which was to become such a poetical way of life in Scotland as to earn the title "Standard Habbie", had a medieval pedigree.[13] However, the metamorphosis of the latter example speaks for itself, while the continuing acceptability of the Catholic Montgomerie's poem is testimony to the fact that it had lost is philosophical and theological meaning entirely.[14]

While I am not suggesting that post-Calvinist Scotland or its poets had no spiritual interest - as we shall see in a way nothing could be further from the truth - I would say that the preceding era deprived them of the means of relating to the spiritual to a unique extent. Given the role of the poet as illustrated by the pre-Reformation achievement, the implications of this for the men of the eighteenth century revival are obviously profound.

Before considering the individual poets in question, however, I should perhaps at this point say something more of the linguistic problems with which the Scottish poet in the eighteenth century was faced. In modern assessments of the period, the question of language invariably plays an important part.[15] The major historical features of the era contributed to the dilemma. The Reformers with their English bible, the Union of Crowns, and later the Union of Parliaments, all of which had undermined Scottish independence and enhanced the influence of England, had simultaneously, among their more destructive functions, usurped the Scots language and promoted the cause of standard English. By the eighteenth century, the Scottish poet was faced with the choice of adopting an English language which remained in many ways foreign to him, or continuing to write in a Scots language, the strength of which was being continuously diluted. The different poetic routes taken by James Thomson on the one hand, and Fergusson and Burns on the other, is itself an illustration of these alternatives.

I do not for a moment deny the importance of this linguistic dilemma. It is in fact too complex an issue to be brought into the body of this discussion without hopelessly complicating the whole. As I have indicated, it is a matter which comes up wherever post-medieval Scottish literature is discussed. By contrast, I have been led to the present study by the fact that its subject, although it seems to me to be the essential subject which begs to be tacked in the field of Scottish literary history, has seldom been considered at length. It is my purpose to discover the fundamental nature of Scottish literature in its various phases, which is to come to an understanding of the consciousness from which it springs. All other questions, including the question of language, follow from this. An understanding of the consciousness which produces a literature may enhance our awareness of the language in which it is written, and of/

of the political and social climate which produced it, but I have been urged to the present task by the fact that these disciplines do not in themselves provide the insight necessary to a perception of the consciousness which produced the literature. This being so, while I recognize that the language problem in Scottish literature was, and to a considerable degree still is, as real as the historical events which produced it, I have chosen in the present study to illustrate that vital area which the summation of material factors alone does not illuminate.

By reference to alternative interpretations, I indicated the shortcomings of such means in getting to the heart of the poetry of the late Middle Ages. I also sought to provide a more telling assessment of the "way of seeing" which permeated that age, by investigating the philosophical and theological vision which it held, as displayed by the poetry itself. It follows that the fate of this vision, the changes which overcame this "way of seeing" remain central to the continuing history of Scottish literature.

Obviously, the present argument lays no claims to infallibility. Other interpretations, concentrating upon other aspects of Scottish literary history, may validly emphasize matters which are not central to this discussion. However, what the present study does seek to do, is to discover the psychological conditions which both generated and regulated the creative impulse in Scotland as evinced by the literature itself. This is to take us, I believe, closer to the heart of the matter and therefore to a deeper comprehension of Scottish literary history, than any definition based wholly upon material factors, be they linguistic, political, sociological or whatever, can possibly take us.

With the revival of Scottish culture in the twentieth century,/

century, it has come to be generally recognized that Scottish poetry achieved its finest expression in the late medieval period, in the presence of relatively favourable linguistic, political and sociological conditions which were thereafter to be eroded, and that the poetic tradition disintegrated with the erosion of these same conditions.[16] This is of course true, but it tells us little about what was lost, and if this is so, it can tell us little about how it was lost, or what, if anything, can be done about it. Essentially, such a definition remains external to the heart of the problem, which is the state of the poetic imagination. It remains external to it in that such a definition, in being wholly material in its terms of reference, is unable to deal fully with a function which is itself far from being wholly material.

Fully functioning, the poetic imagination springs from the interplay of the spiritual and the material aspects of human life, and it is therefore only capable of full expression in a society in which it is assumed that these aspects can and should co-exist. I have already sought to show that the presence of this assumption was the source of the great flowering of Scottish poetry in the late Middle Ages. The disintegration of the same assumption in the post-medieval period was the essential feature in the demise of the culture which it had nourished. As a result of this disintegration, the abandonment of the principle of reconciliation, any subsequent cultural revival was condemned to exist upon a wholly material plane as, in the absence of that principle, the spiritual universe remained entirely hostile to the material world within which the poetic imagination was consequently imprisoned. The fact that in the twentieth century our definition of Scottish literature past and present is still largely restricted to the consideration of material features is a continuing expression of/

of this condition, and one which I would submit justifies the rather different emphasis of the present study.

To return then to the main discussion, given the irreconcilable condition of world and spirit in the Scottish consciousness, the poets of the eighteenth century cultural revival had no alternative but to write in, and draw their precedents from a purely temporal tradition. Nor was this achieved without moments of anguish. As the world of which they made their poetry was held to be execrable by the religious climate into which they were born, so by celebrating that world they were choosing a path which, according to the beliefs that they were only with the greatest difficulty rejecting, led to their damnation:

> ... it is comparatively easy to adopt a new philosophy intellectually, but surprisingly difficult to free oneself from the emotions and the taboos generated by previous beliefs and age-old traditions. Even among the most vociferous exponents of enlightenment, there must have been many doubts, many heart-searchings, many fits of despair, generated by the consciousness of intolerable tensions. One can imagine the form such questioning would take. Perhaps the faith of our childhood is true after all, and our inability to make up our minds, our own character defects, our loose living, our liberal and progressive opinions themselves, are nothing but the outward and visible marks of our damnation? Possibly there is no hope for us, no hope whatsoever? May not Boston and Calvin and Knox be proved right at the last day, and we be banished with Davy Hume and the mass of the unregenerate to an eternity of spiritual torture?[17]

A "consciousness of intolerable tensions" was the legacy of the void between the spirit and the world which had come into existence with the rejection of reconciliation. As a result of this rejection, the possibility of transcending the tension and achieving a synthesis between the two was precluded. Given this, the only means of escape from the "intolerable" pressure lay in a commitment to the affairs of the world, a direction which, given the/

the existence of such a void, necessitated in effect the dismissal of a spirituality wholly hostile to these affairs. But for those who took this direction, the memory remained that by the tenets of the tradition which, no doubt with misgivings they were rejecting, their conduct stood condemned. Morbid doubts would inevitably follow the progressive spirits of a nation so recently and so deeply imbued with the religion of the Covenanters. Professor Crawford has illustrated the resultant tension in the lives of Hume, Boswell and Byron, as well as its effect upon Burns himself.[18] One figure of the eighteenth century whom he does not mention in this respect, but whose life seems to represent the clearest picture of the working of such tensions, is Burns' great predecessor Robert Fergusson.[19]

Fergusson died at the early age of twenty three years. We are left by this fact, both to wonder at the quality of what he actually achieved during his short life, and at the immense potential which, given another ten, twenty or thirty years, might have been fulfilled. His best works are certainly his poems in the Scots tongue, and the essential subject of these, is a continuing celebration of the chaotic and fascinating character of the Edinburgh in which he lived. There is too in this poetry a facility for reflection which gives a tantalizing indication of what a longer life and wider experience may have produced. "Braid Claith" is a warm-hearted observation of the little pretensions of ordinary folk. On the Sabbath, the barber dons his Sunday best, like many another promenader, turned "macaroni" for the day:

> Well might ye trow, to see them there,
> That they to shave your haffits bare,
> Or curl and sleek a pickle hair,
> Wad be right laith,
> Whan pacing wi' a gawsy air
> In gude Braid Claith.

But from these observations, the general statement of the opening stanza:

> Ye wha are fain to hae your name
> Wrote i' the bonny book o' Fame,
> Let merit nae pretension claim
> To laurell'd wreath,
> But hap ye weel, bath back and wame,
> In gude Braid Claith.

arrives at the conclusion:

> Braid Claith lend fouk an unco heese
> Maks mony kail-worms butterflies,
> Gies mony a doctor his degrees,
> For little skaith:
> In short, you may be what you please
> Wi' gude Braid Claith.
>
> For thof ye had as wise a snout on
> As Shakespeare or Sir Isaac Newton,
> Your judgement fouk wad hae a doubt on,
> I'll take my aith,
> Till they cou'd see ye wi' a suit on
> O' gude Braid Claith

The reflective note is given more extended expression in "The Ghaists". The poem takes the form of a dialogue between the ghosts of Heriot and Watson, two of Edinburgh's late benefactors buried in Greyfriars churchyard. The immediate reason why their rest is disturbed is that the benefits which they bequeathed to the city in their lifetimes are now being undermined by the Mortmain Bill, in the financial interests of the London-based government.[20] Beyond this, however, the poem is a general lament for the fact that:

> ... e'er to England's ground
> Scotland was eikit by the Union's bond!

On a wider plane still comes the general observation:

> I find, my friend! that ye but little ken,
> There's e'en now on earth a set o' men,
> Wha, if they get their private pouches lin'd
> Gie na a winnlestrae for a' mankind.

These points should not distract us over long from those superb portraits of Edinburgh life which were Fergusson's greatest achievement. However, they remain an indication of the poetic expansion of/

of which the twenty three year old, had he lived, may have been capable. He not only celebrated the everyday world in the most memorable fashion, but was also well able to reflect upon its nature. The essential insufficiency of that world, in relation to the psychological dichotomy with which we are centrally concerned is reflected in Fergusson's life rather than his poetry, in that his poetry lives on one side of the division. There is however one poem which may obliquely lament in the knowledge of spiritual disinheritance, and in the realization that the human lot is thus at base a tragedy:

> Kind Nature lent but for a day
> Her wings to mak ye sprush and gay;
> In her habuliments a while
> Ye may your former sell beguile,
> And ding awa' the vexing thought
> O' hourly dwinin' into nought.

One cannot help but note that these lines from "On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street", and indeed the poem as a whole, seem to provide a telling indication of Fergusson's personal psychologcial condition. If so, whether it mourns the fate of the materialist man with no expectations beyond that sphere, or of a world which like that of Orpheus stands condemned before the unattainable ideal, it expresses the tragedy of a situation from which the possibility of universal reconciliation is excluded.

The history of Robert Fergusson is itself a chronicle of the destructive effects of the division which had come to exist within the Scottish consciousness. Essentially, his poetry records the everyday life, particularly those occasions on which that life was enhanced by its seasonal celebrations, of his native Edinburgh. A glance through the titles of his poems confirms this: "The Daft Days", "Leith Races", "Hallow-Fair", "The Election" being only a few of many. These events are portrayed with a verve and linguistic surety which/

which pays the most memorable testimony to that life. The following extracts from "Auld Reekie" will serve as an example:

> Now Morn, with bonny purple smiles,
> Kisses the air-cock o' Saunt Giles;
> Rakin their een the servant lasses
> Early begin their lies and clashes. ...
>
> On stair, wi' tub or pat in hand,
> The barefoot housemaids loe to stand,
> That antrin fock may ken how snell
> Auld Reekie will at mornin smell:
> Then, with an inundation big as
> The burn that 'neath the Nor' Loch brig is,
> They kindly shower Edina's roses,
> To quicken and regale our noses. ...
>
> Now stairhead critics, senseless fools!
> Censure their aim, andpride their rules,
> In Luckenbooths, wi' glowerin eye,
> Their neebours sma'est faults descry.
> If ony loun should dander there,
> O' awkward gait and foreign air,
> They trace his steps, till they can tell
> His pedigree as weel's himsel.
>
> Whan Phoebus blinks wi' warmer ray,
> And schools at noon-day get the play,
> Then bus'ness weighty bus'ness comes;
> The trader glowrs; he doubts, he hums.
> The lawyers eke to cross repair,
> Their wigs to shaw, and toss an air;
> While busy agent closely plies,
> And a' his kittle cases tries.
>
> Now night, thats cunzied chief for fun,
> Is wi' her usual rites begun; ...
>
> Now some to porter, some to punch -
> Some to their wife, - and some to their wench, -
> Retire; - while noisy ten-hours drum
> Gars a' your trades gae danderin home.
> Now, mony a club, jocose and free,
> Gie a' to merriment and glee:
> Wi' sang, and glass, they fley the pow'r
> O Care, that wad harass the hour:
> For wine and Bacchus still bear down
> Our thrawart fortune's wildest frown;
> It makes you stark, and bauld, and brave,
> Even whan descendin to the grave. ...

At the same time, the last few lines quoted recall the melancholy which haunts "On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street". Fergusson's personal existence during the period which produced the poetry,/

poetry, seems to have been wholeheartedly involved in the world which his work describes. If this is so, there is little that is blameworthy to be noted. Such behaviour could easily have supplied the "taill" within one of Henryson's lightest moral fables. Indeed, by way of a reflection of this point, the holidays which prompt so many of the poems were often, in that earlier age, simultaneously holy days, in an age when it was considered proper that the world and the spirit should inter-relate. The fact that this was no longer so, that quite the opposite had come to be the case, is an expression of that division which overcame the Scottish consciousness in the post-Reformation era.

By the religious tradition into which Ferguson was born, his poetry and the world it celebrated had come to be regarded as clean contrary to spiritual well-being. As the primary level at which the division existed was the individual consciousness, the poet's immersion in the affairs of his world would render him liable, were he susceptible to the precepts of his religious milieu, to a life wrought with internal contradiction. In the case of the one time divinity student, this proved to be so to a tragic extent.[21]

Fergusson was overwhelmed by a religious melancholy. He burned his unpublished poems, and took to brooding over the religious tracts produced by the more fanatical divines, the internal contradiction driving him ultimately to the conclusion that in living the life which his poems describe, he had been nothing less than one of those who executed Christ.[22] In this the effect of the divided Scottish consciousness is tragically illustrated by Fergusson's early death in the Edinburgh bedlam. In the absence of reconciliation, and short of the double standards of the elect, such tensions were inherent in the/

the religious climate into which Fergusson was born.

In the circumstances which the division produced, the only means by which a manageable definition of existence could be achieved, was to remain content with the affairs of the world, abandoning the consideration of a spiritual regime which was entirely hostile to that world. Fergusson's poetry is the measure of his success in this. But his later condition is a stark indication of the psychological pressure which such a commitment still involved in the face of the lingering power of a religious tradition which, although it created the conditions which made for the isolated temporality of that commitment, by the same token condemned it. However, this was not to be its final expression, and Burns, assisted perhaps by a more self-sufficient nature than his predecessor, was to continue that revival of which Fergusson's poetry is a brilliant landmark.

Section (b)

The converse of the emphasis which the twentieth century has placed upon the poetry of medieval Scotland has seen a qualification of the achievements of Scottish poetry subsequent to that period. In effect, this has been most obvious with regard to the de-canonization of the giant of post-Reformation Scottish poetry, Robert Burns. To a degree this redistribution of values was laudable, not only in that it was merited by the quality of much medieval poetry, but in that it introduced the possibility of critical assessment to the self-congratulatory world of the Burns cult. However, what this further implies is that the life and literature of post-Reformation Scotland lacked something which the late medieval period possessed. What that something is, has never been adequately defined. The initial pre-requisite to such a definition would be a true conception of the/

the properties unique to the poets of pre-Reformation Scotland, and of what subsequently became of those properties. This I have sought to establish. Having done so, we might then begin to attempt an assessment of why the subsequent poetry, in this instance the poetry of Burns, is as it is, contrast it with the earlier poetic achievement, and come to some useful conclusion, as to whatever losses are thereby revealed. On the other hand, our resultant appreciation of the relatively unconducive atmosphere which eighteenth century Ayrshire presented to the poetic imagination, may lead us to a more just estimation of the achievement of Burns, by any standards a very great poet, in responding to the actuality with which he was faced.

In 1931 A Burns Jamieson brought out his own account of Burns in response to the fact that:

> During the past few years the Burns cult had become more perverted than ever in defending its idol against the reaction which has set in with the new movement in Scottish literature and affairs.[23]

However, the excesses of the cult being self-evident, and moreover under general attack, it is the reaction which most seriously concerns Jamieson, as a result of which, he fears, "It is now fashionable in certain Scottish circles to deny any real importance to Burns in the history of Scottish literature."[24] If this was so, then Jamieson's response was certainly desirable. More specifically, however, he was concerned about the rise of the general opinion that there was something essentially lacking from Burns' poetry; "much has been said about the failure of Burns, but not everyone is agreed as to what the failure was."[25] As an early example of this he quotes Carlyle:

> It was a want of unity in his purpose, of consistency in his aims; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature.[26]

This may tell us as much about Carlyle as it does about Burns, and I will return to the point later.

Essentially, Jamieson quite rightly claims that which Carlyle considered "hapless" to be laudible. Using the terminology of Matthew Arnold,[27] he describes Burns' effort as an attempt to fuse "Hebraism", or the best of the Calvinist tradition, with "Hellenism", or all that the new age evolved which was humanitarian and life-enhancing.[28] Seen thus, Burns' effort was heroic and his failure tragic. Ultimately, however, the term failure remains, not a personal failure perhaps, but one inherent in the poet's situation. It is a problem which more recent criticism has continued to confirm.

On the most unsympathetic level, Christina Keith returned the fault to the personality of the poet:

> But life to Burns comprehends only what is actual, what is real for the moment. Any deeper meaning he does not sense. ... Reflection - the one quality denied him - would seem to be the sine qua non for the great poet.[29]

For David Daiches, Burns:

> represented the last brilliant flare-up of a Scottish literary tradition that had been developing for centuries and that in the eighteenth century was in its final, disintegrating phase, and his character was to a large extent moulded by the impact of the rising world of urban gentility on the final phase of this tradition.[30]

As we have seen, (p. 165), Thomas Crawford speaks of the "intolerable tensions" springing from the essential incompatibility which existed between traditional Calvinism and the progressive attitudes with which Burns was in sympathy.

While Miss Keith's statement is indicative of effects rather than causes, and given that the emphasis of all the assessments vary, they all point to the presence of an irreconcilable dilemma governing Burns' poetic achievement. Among many others, those writers whom I/

I have mentioned have made specialized and extended studies of the poetry of Burns. On such a level, I am neither qualified nor inclined to extend or contradict their criticisms. What I can seek to do in the case of Burns, as I have sought to do throughout, is to render the nature of the poet's achievement more fully comprehensible, and also the recurring themes of Burns criticism, by placing them in the context of the major factors influencing Scottish life and literature as I have described them, just as this short section exists in the context of the present study.

As with other Scots of the eighteenth century revival, Burns was inevitably afflicted by the dichotomy between world and spirit which was the psychological legacy of Calvinist Scotland. The melancholy which pervades much of his early poetry, stems from the irreconcilability of the two. Interspersed with his first celebrations of the sexual passions are such pieces as "A Prayer, Under the Pressure of Violent Anguish","Winter, A Dirge", and "Remorse".[31]

> For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
> I tremble to approach an angry GOD,
> And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

("Stanzas on the same occasion, " - directly following "A Prayer, in the Prospect of Death").

In the absence of reconciliation, there exists no means through which Robert Burns and his God can achieve a manageable relationship. As a result, the most typical note struck in these early poems, is that of a lament for the incommensurability which is the consequence:

> Thou POW'R SUPREME, whose mighty Scheme
> These woes of mine fulfill;
> Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
> Because they are Thy will!
> Then all I want (Oh, do thou grant
> This one request of mine!)
> Since to enjoy Thou dost deny,
> Assist me to resign.
>
> (Winter, A Dirge)

The above stanza is illustrative of the absolutism of Calvinist spirituality. By its terms, the world is wholly evil and humanity's role in the world is not to enjoy but to endure with resignation. Certainly, to'thole'ill-fortune was the pious response to the inscrutable workings of Providence which Calvinism promoted. In the case of the present poem, however, I feel that the effect is ambivalent. This is not to say that the prayer that the poem contains is insincere, but that in the context of the poem, such sincerity is itself ambivalent. To read these lines aloud, giving the italicized words their due emphasis, may underline sincerity, but it also conveys the fact that it is a sincerity at the end of its tether, confounded by the crushing weight which the Calvinist response places upon the human spirit.

Moreoever, as we have noted, the resultant psychological trauma was compounded by the fact that the absolutism of Calvinist spirituality simultaneously denied the possibility of any conciliatory interpretation of the relationship between God and man being admitted within the traditional religious pale. Such absolutism was itself a denial of reconciliation and an assertion of disjunction. Thus the situationdecreed that a more positive vision of earthly existence could only be attained by way of the traumatic abandonment of the spiritual tradition which denied the possibility:

> None of these devotional poems is specifically Christian; in "A Prayer in Prospect of Death," for example, Burns rests all his hopes on the father's goodness, not on redemption by Christ, and his thought seems to move from an almost Jewish Old-Testament religion to "The daring path Spinoza trod,"[32] without any intermediary stage of Christian conviction.[33]

I would suggest that Mr Crawford's observation is explicable in terms of the situation that I have described. A choice between such/

such opposites was the only choice which the religious climate of Calvinist Scotland allowed. Conversely, the essence of the Christian religion, that is the intermediary principle which the Redemption established, faded from the Scottish consciousness as it faded from the consciousness of Burns. Unable to seek salvation through the emulation of Christ, that consciousness was left prostrate before an Old Testament deity which demanded absolute submission or nothing.

While Spinoza was not an atheist, his concept of a distant creator was sufficiently close to it in the eye of the orthodox believer for him to be labelled as such. In his Jewishness, the philosopher had a certain amount in common with the Scottish poet who responded to his thought in that he, in the truest sense, moved between a "Jewish Old-Testament Religion," and the "daring path Spinoza trod." Spinoza too existed in a climate which lacked any principle of reconciliation. The following statement, which Matthew Arnold used as a preface to his essay "Spinoza and the Bible" was issued by the Jews of the Portuguese Synagogue at Amsterdam in 1656. Burns of course was not a Jew, and although the demands of his religious background were absolute, its unquestioned authority over life in general had diminished in the hundred years which separate the two men. Nevertheless, I include the statement in that it is indicative of the void which existed between Jehovah, and those who offered him less than absolute adherence, and because Burns sprung from a religious tradition which in effect had reverted to a similar situation:

> By the sentence of the angels, by the decree of the saints, we anathematise, cutoff, curse, and execrate Baruch Spinoza, in the presence of these sacred books with six hundred and thirteen precepts which are written therein, with the anathema wherewith Elisha cursed the children; and with all/

> all the cursings which are written in the Book of the Law; cursed be he by day, and cursed by night; cursed when he lieth down, and cursed when he riseth up, cursed when he goeth out, and cursed when he cometh in; the Lord pardon him never; the wrath and fury of the Lord burn up this man, and bring upon him all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law. The Lord blot out his name under heaven. The Lord set him apart for destruction from all the tribes of Israel, with all the curses of the firmament which are written in the Book of the Law. ... There shall no man speak to him no man write to him, man show him any kindness, no man stay under the same roof with him, no man come nigh him.[34]

We can well imagine a similar fate being called down upon the enemies of the Covenants. Before their God likewise, there could be no compromise. This being the case, for the Scot, the choice was either to adhere to the religion of his ancestors, in the country which had nurtured the covenanting saints, or, as was increasingly the case by Burns' time, to drift in the direction which Spinoza had taken, to the accompaniment of the anathemas issuing forth from the defenders of the Calvinist tradition.

Despite Burns' own reference to Spinoza, I would not seek to establish too positive a connection between the respective thought of the philosopher and the poet. I have rather sought to indicate the negative condition which they shared, which was a milieu which allowed no room for manoeuvre philosophically, theologically or imaginatively. Burns' personal heresy lay for the most part in the development of the conception of a benign creator more specifically involved with humanity than anything that Spinoza would allow. We see this development even in the early poems, side by side with the Calvin-haunted pieces I have mentioned:

> Where with <u>intention</u> I have err'd
> No other plea I have,
> But <u>Thou art good</u>; and Goodness still
> Delighteth to forgive. (A Prayer in the Prospect of Death)

I have already referred (pp. 152-153) to the rise of such attitudes in the Scottish Church; the Arminianism of the "New Light" party. It is well attested that Burns' father was in sympathy with the new mood,[35] and that the poet's family background thereby encouraged his own alignment with New Light philosophy in his adulthood and in his poetry. It must be recognized, however, that while in the general sense such terms as "moderate" or "progressive" may rightly be attributed to this development, it is nonetheless here that the negative comparison with Spinoza's situation takes effect, in that the continuity which such terms might seem to suggest was in truth inconceivable in the face of the basic theological revolt which the attitudes of the New Lights in fact embodied.

The New Lights acknowledged man's free will to choose the good or the evil path. Indeed, the increasingly rationalistic atmosphere of the eighteenth century which stimulated their opinions, prompted a belief in the fundamental goodness of man. From this flowed the liberating conclusion that man had an active role in determining his eternal destiny, and the concept of a benign creator willing the salvation of all mankind. Clearly, this totally contradicts the traditional Calvinism which the Auld Lights maintained, centred as it was on the related doctrines of universal reprobation and predestination. In such conditions, schism, and here we are concerned with schism on a psychological level, was inevitable.

The important point, as I sought to show earlier, is that the nature of that which emerges from schism, though it be marked by attitudes which are the opposite of the situation to which it is a reaction, is nonetheless determined by that same situation. The direction taken by the New Lights, in being a reaction against the tradition maintained by the Auld Lights, was restricted by the/

the limitations which that tradition placed upon reaction. As I have said the central debilitation which that tradition enacted upon the Scottish consciousness, was to deprive it of any real awareness of the reconciliatory function of Christianity. Returning to the specific case, to complete Crawford's observation on the matter:

> Sometimes Burns would feel drawn to the personality of Christ, that 'amiablest of characters'(36) but he did not give memorable poetic expression to such emotions. In Burns' imagination, the Devil was always a far more vital symbol than Christ.[37]

Again, this would seem to give specific illustration to the situation I have described. The reduction of the conception of Christ to the status of "personality", no matter how amiable, is indicative of the loss of any real awareness of the revolution in the human condition which the person of Christ embodied. From the purest initial intentions, indeed, largely because of that uncompromising purity, Calvinism effected a latter-day rejection of the cornerstone upon which the edifice by which world and spirit had been reconciled was based, returning existence to a state of confrontation between Jehovah, and a world which, viewed thus, becomes synonymous with the Devil.

Therefore, while in reacting against this situation, the New Lights revived an interpretation of existence to be found in pre-Calvinist and non-Calvinist Christianity, they themselves had been deprived of any such spiritual foundation for their stance. Rather, their opinions evolved in communion with the rationalism of the age, supported by the general optimism which its revelations of universal order, and forecasts of indefinite progress promoted.

Retrospectively, we can see the weakness of this position. What becomes of a faith based upon science and rationalism when science and rationalism begin to undermine that faith? Nevertheless, the revolution which the New Lights enacted was positive, courageous, and/

and, as I have indicated, dictated by the conditions against which they reacted. Those conditions denied them the inspiration of a consciousness of the divine humanity of Christ. What they could, and did do, was to seek inspiration from a conviction of man's propensity towards good. The positive and the negative of this situation were shared by the imagination, and it goes far towards explaining the nature of Burns' poetry. Christ is not a vital symbol in Burns' imagination, because He had ceased to be a vital symbol in the Scottish imagination. This, the loss of the symbolism of reconciliation, was, as I have argued throughout, the cause of the disjunction which marks the fate of post-Reformation Scotland, and it is also the essence of Burns' own imaginative limitations. Here, to make use of Jamieson's analogy, lies the missing pre-requisite to the harmonious synthesis of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism".

However, having acknowledged this basic qualification, and being left with a clearer view of the situation with which Burns was faced, and the options which were open to him, we can see in the totality of his achievement a consistent, and as I have indicated, in the circumstances, a highly courageous effort to establish a positive interpretation of existence, subject to that qualification. If the negative of the situation is contained in the absence of Christ, the positive at the heart of Burns' poetry is encapsulated in the "person" of the Devil. There is an implicit ambivalence in the peculiar degree of "personality" which the Devil enjoyed within the Scottish imagination. To the Auld Lights, for whom, but for predestination, mankind was irredeemably reprobate, he became virtually synonymous with that reprobate humanity. Inverting this logic, to the New Lights, hope came to rest upon the innate goodness of humanity, which in the circumstances was to introduce the ultimate possibility of the/

the restoration of the Devil himself. In epistles, political poems and songs, Burns again and again asserts this hope. Elsewhere, as in the Kirk Satires, he makes ironic use of Auld Light opinion, allowing them to betray the inadequacy of their theory by the hypocrisy which it necessitates in practice. Ultimately, however, it is the ambiguity which itself springs from the confrontation of these two diametrically opposed definitions of humanity, which makes the Scottish Devil a unifying symbol in Burns' poetry.

Through these means, Burns sought to escape the life-sapping dichotomy which scarred the Calvinist consciousness. The spiritual despair in which it was liable to result, we have witnessed in the life and death of Robert Fergusson. There we saw the extent to which pleasures that the non-Calvinist would consider spiritually harmless, were sufficient to evoke thoughts of damnation. But in this situation, with the most common aspects of human existence elevated to an awesome degree of evil, there lurked a logical reversal which would suggest itself to those who found their hope in workings of common humanity. The converse of a Satanic presence at every human occasion, was an exceptionally human Devil.

This was Burns' response, and if as I have suggested, it casts light upon his entire poetic achievement, then his "Address to the Deil" is something of a manifesto. With no inference as to Milton's own religious position intended, the Miltonic epigraph with which Burns precedes his poem:

> O Prince, O chief of many throned pow'rs,
> That led th' embattl'd Seraphim to war -

nonetheless is at one with the traditionally awesome Satan of the Calvinists. The opening lines of the poem itself, immediately deflate the situation:

> O THOU, whatever title suit thee.
> Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie.

This is of course the most obvious critical point. But the significance of the contrast goes far beyond that of its immediate poetic effect. We in Scotland are so familiar with the work of Burns that we accept his intimacy with the Devil as one of the standard features of Scottish poetry; we read the "Address to the Deil" as a sceptical and highly comic treatment of popular superstition, perhaps acknowledging that the superstition has its roots in "that brilliantly picturesque personality created and cherished by the Kirk,"[38] and leave it at that. This response may be true within its own terms, but it assumes that the Calvinist background existed for no other reason than to facilitate the emergence of Burns' attitude, (an attitude which would come to be regarded as typically Scottish) just as the Miltonic epigraph facilitates the poem. Interpreted thus indeed, the Calvinism almost comes to be associated with the comedy. This is only so in the sense that Burns' comedy is the positive antithesis of the conditions which provoked Fergusson's tragedy.

Both responses, the tragic and the comic, sprung from the fact that Calvinist spirituality had discarded the means by which the reality of human life and human failings could be accommodated. With the resultant dichotomy, everyday existence was undermined at every turn by the spiritual absolute. But, by the same dichotomy, the spiritual absolute was, increasingly with the passage of time, undermined by everyday existence. With the former fixed by dogma, and the latter, that is man's definition of himself, subject to change, it is obvious that the fixity would lie under the threat of obsolescence. In the "Address to the Deil," Burns captured the strain which change had wrought upon tradition, applying a modern eye to dogma, here the ubiquitous power of Satan over fallen man, and undermining it by the comedy that springs from the evolution of a kindlier definition of mankind.

Thus, a tradition which had Satan as an intimate presence, even at an old woman's prayers:

> When twilight did my Graunie summon,
> To say her pray'rs, douse, honest woman,
> Aft 'yont the dykes she's heard you bumman,
> Wi' eerie drone;
> Or, rustling, thro' the bootries coman,
> Wi' heavy groan.

is rendered comic by the fact that time has raised a sceptical eyebrow as to the objective existence of the Devil, which suggests that his attendance might just be explicable in terms of droning cattle and a groaning wind. The various malfunctionings of milk cow and "young guidman", and the speaker's own encounter with the Deil, who "squatter'd like a drake - on whistling wings", are likewise open to duel definition.

However, the "Address to the Deil" is more than a sceptical, if warm-hearted joke. We should not equate Burns' tone with the post-religious tone of a later age. On the other hand, the Calvinist theology which he questioned allowed for no such questions so that his position was heretical in terms of his own religious tradition. But the heresy is itself religious, or at least it seeks to be so. The penultimate phase of the poem, beginning, "Lang syne in Eden's bonie yard", turns, still in comic tone, to the traditional religious teaching from which sprung the intimacy with the Devil of which the "Address to the Deil" makes play. Significantly, this section centres on the case of Job, the "man of Uz", at once the personification of the central Calvinist characteristic of resignation, and the extreme expression of Satan's unhampered sovereignty over humanity. The point is, that in the act of addressing the Devil, Burns is in fact rejecting both. In the statement "Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee", and what follows, he calls a halt to human passivity in the face of the "spitfu' joke", not so much of Satan but of the Judaic theology/

theology, which Calvinism had revived, which made him lord of the earth.

The "Address to the Deil" is, of course, essentially comic. But the depth of the comedy is only enhanced by the realization that it entails a rebellion against a tradition which, by turning the lowing of cattle and the whisper of wind into Satanic visitations, had burnt the last of several thousand grannies as recently as 1727.[39] In questioning the Devil, Burns in fact questions the theology which makes everyday life his property, and in doing so, he admits the possibility that mankind might "turn a corner jinkan" and save itself. The superb stroke with which the poem concludes, the suggestion that the Deil himself might be rehabilitated, is the logical end to which this process leads, and it is thereby the ultimate counter to the anathemas issuing forth from the chosen of Jehovah:

> But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
> O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
> Ye aiblins might - I dinna ken -
> Still hae a stake -
> I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
> Ev'n for your sake.[40]

Here, Burns negates the concept of universal reprobation by raising the possibility of universal salvation. As I have indicated, the problem itself places limitations upon the solution. In that it denies recourse to any reconciliatory principle, the dilemma posed by human imperfection is only deferred. However, on the positive side, the same hiatus which the loss of that principle created, provided practical support for Burns' own position. It was as a consequence of this hiatus that the conviction of human reprobation re-emerged, and this in turn necessitated the formulation of some other means through which the possibility of salvation could be maintained. This, of course, resulted in the centrality of the doctrine of predestination within Calvinist theology.[41] Burns, in having rejected the concept of reprobation, would find himself by logical extension in/

in confrontation with the theory of election, and the practical manifestations of that theory could only serve to encourage him in the wisdom of his own opinion.

In denying the means of reconciliation, Calvinism had in effect denied man's ability to participate in the achievement of his own salvation. In order to avoid something akin to fatalism, predestination in practice evolved a conviction of election, which, since no-one in reality is perfect, related ultimately to nothing other than self-esteem. To compute election and damnation upon such a tenuous and incorporeal basis would clearly be a matter open to question in the eyes of the rational observer, and Burns' kirk satires spring largely from the interplay of rationalism and traditional Calvinist dogma. Having dealt with reprobation by addressing its personification, in the "Address to the Deil", Burns raised just this question in his "Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous":

> Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,
> And shudder at the niffer,
> But cast a moment's fair regard
> What maks the mighty differ;

What is more, if the theory of predestination contains this weakness, the fact of human imperfection renders its credibility even more questionable in practice:

> Discount what scant occasion gave,
> That purity ye pride in,
> And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
> Your better art o' hiding.

In Burns' kirk satires and elsewhere, hypocrisy has been singled out as the particular vice of Calvinist Scotland. We have already seen the subject playfully treated in Fergusson's "Braid Claith". Later, its dark conclusions would be investigated by James Hogg in his Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, and again in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, by Robert Louis Stevenson. Critics of Scottish/

Scottish literature invariably acknowledge this continuing concern, and in general it is attributed to the Calvinist background. Precisely why that background should produce such an effect has never, to my knowledge, been satisfactorily explained. In the context of the present study, however, I believe that an explanation does emerge. The incommensurability which the presence of imperfection and the absence of reconciliation implies, rendered the maintenance of double standards a necessary accomplishment. The alternative, or rather, the reaction, as the traditional religious definition allowed for no internal re-assessment, was that direction taken by the New Light party, and exemplified by Burns' poetic attitude. Reason, objecting to the arbitrary and absolute theory of predestination, found corroboration in the practical contradictions presented by the hypocrisy which it engendered. Hence the Kirk Satires, including, in "Holy Willie's Prayer", the great comic personification of the psychological contortions necessary to the maintenance of a religion devoid of the principle of reconciliation.

Where once, imperfect man had been reconciled with the spiritual ideal by his efforts to emulate, and thereby co-operate with that ideal, under the theory of predestination, the salvation of the elect, and the damnation of the rest of humanity was assured by factors quite irrespective of actual human conduct. It is upon this doctrine, and thus irrespective of conduct that Holy Willie confidently rests his assumption of personal salvation and the damnation of his enemies, who are, by definition, the enemies of God:

> I bless and praise they matchless might,
> When thousands thou hast left in night,
> That I am here before they sight,
> For gifts and grace,
> A burning and a shining light
> To a' this place.

It will be noted that Willie's faith does not exclude mercy. The first five stanzas of the poem speak of little else, but it is mercy perverted. If mankind stands condemned "Thro' Adam's cause", then clearly some conception of mercy is a necessary prerequisite to salvation. While the reformers' commitment to faith over works may have been a reasonable response to the corrupt practices of late medieval Christianity, it hides, in effect, a profound dissociation between appearance and reality. What the mundane idea of good works concealed was a principle of salvation based upon the cultivation in the human breast of that redemptive quality of mercy, of selfless love, upon which Christ had set His seal. Salvation had thus been based upon co-operation between God and man. The dismissal of salvation based on works rendered mankind reprobate, and incapable of doing anything about it. In such circumstances, mercy could only the arbitrary gift of God which the theory of predestination asserted, and its recipients could discern their election only on the grounds of self-esteem, with the capacity for hypocrisy which it necessitated, which was the practical expression of that theory. This is the nature of mercy as Willie describes it in the opening stanzas of the poem, given arbitrarily, and received by assumption:

> Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
> To show thy grace is great and ample.

As I have said, the dismissal of works, of man's active role in the propagation of redemptive mercy, involved a dissociation of appearance and reality. The remaining stanzas of "Holy Willie's Prayer" exploit two converse expressions of this. The first of these concerns Willie's response to the problem of sin. By detaching salvation from human behaviour, predestination at once detached culpability from human behaviour. Thus, on the assumption that he and his neighbours are respectively beatified and damned from/

from the beginning of time, Willie is in a position to identify sin, not in terms of behaviour, but by reference to the pre-ordained destination of the participants. Thus, while the damned are defined by their faults - "drinkers drink, and swearers swear" - Willie 'tholes' the temptations of the world and the flesh which beset him when passively "fou" (as opposed to actively drinking), with a humility which is itself a mark of his sainthood:

> Maybe thou lets this fleshy thorn
> Buffet thy servant e'en and morn,
> Lest he o'er proud and high should turn,
> That he's sae gifted;
> If sae, thy hand maun e'en be borne
> Until thou lift it.

The third section of the poem is based, as I have indicated, on the converse implication. The displacement of the redeeming virtue of mercy, by which good and evil are reconciled, by the doctrine of predestination, not only detaches sin from human behaviour, it also detaches virtue. Willie's election not only exempts him from the wages of sin, it also frees him from the necessity of showing compassion towards those who, in defying him, are self-evidently damned. From a conviction of personal election:

> L--d bless thy Chosen in this place
> For here thou has a chosen race;

that is, an assumption that he is in receipt of divine mercy, Willie feels entitled to seek assurances that his predestined eminence and the damnation of his tormentors, shall not be undermined by any last minute extension of clemency:

> L--d, in thy day o' vengence try him!
> L--d visit him that did employ him!
> And pass not in thy mercy by them,
> Nor here their prayer;
> But for thy people's sake destroy them,
> And dinna spare!

It must be remembered of course that "Holy Willie's Prayer" is a comic satire, that Willie was an actual character in the parish of/

of Mauchline, and that the events which soured him against Aitken and Hamilton did in fact take place. The combination of spite and self-satisfaction which he exhibits is not an inevitable consequence of Calvinism. The more honest response, as I have indicated, would be something akin to spiritual despair. However, this very fact is illustrative of the manner in which predestination promoted, as an alternative, the hypocrisy which Holy Willie personifies. Moreover, in another sense the dispute between Willie and Robert Aitken does relate to the wider confrontation between Auld Lights and the New. Both Aitken and Gavin Hamilton were of the New Light party, and in attacking them Willie is by extension anathematizing the emergence of attitudes which would deny the dogmas upon which the hypocrite's assurance is based. The invocation "pass not in thy mercy by them", is a plea for the maintenance of an absolute distinction between Israelite and Egyptian, between chosen and damned,[42] within which structure Willie can curse his enemies as the enemies of God, while reminding his creator that the glorification of Willie is the glorification of God:

> But Lord, remember me and mine,
> Wi' mercies temporal and divine!
> That I for grace and gear may shine,
> Excell'd by nane!
> And a' the glory shall be thine!
> AMEN! AMEN!

In reality, the struggle between good and evil is at base personal and internal. The distortions which Willie expresses spring from the disjunction between this reality and a tradition which in the theory of predestination, dissociated spiritual truth from human morality.

One further point which emerges is the fact that for Willie, the accumulation of "grace and gear" is synonymous. This is the/

the material expression of his malady. Calvinism abandoned the external symbols of spiritual grace upon which the medieval church had its base, and denied the related conception of grace through works. Within that structure the material related to the eternal on a basis of reconciliation, and that reconciliation was mirrored in its expressions. By contrast, in relating the religion of the "unco guid" to the avid pursuit of "gear", Burns gives material expression to the psychological distortions attendant upon the abandonment of that reconciliatory principle. For Willie, material election corroborates spiritual election, and if Burns' own religious attitude abhors the latter, the former outrages the impulses of reason, of democracy, and of human sympathy which informs that attitude.[43] Time and again he attacks the two as sides of the same coin:

> But I gae mad at their grimaces,
> Their sighan, cantan, grace-prood faces,
> Their three-mile prayers, an' hauf-mile graces
> Their raxan conscience,
> Whase greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces.
> Waur nor their nonsense.

(To the Rev. John M'Math, Inclosing a copy of "Holy Willie's Prayer", which he requested).

In acknowledging this intimacy, we inevitably come into contact with the continuing debate instigated by the works of Weber[44] and Tawney[45] and proposing that Protestantism greatly assisted the rise of Capitalism. Others, G R Elton, for example, have questioned this, pointing to the fact that Capitalism both pre-dates Protestantism, and has hardly been exclusive to Protestant countries in the post-Reformation era.[46] These points are certainly valid, and I have no wish to take up a position in the debate. I refer only to factors indicated by the present study, and one of these is that Burns in his poetry seems to suggest some such intimacy. However, the present study would further indicate that this relationship was not positive but negative. Its/

Its origins existed, not of course, in the intentions of the reformers, but as an unforeseen consequence of the abandonment of reconciliation, and the dichotomy between world and spirit in which it resulted. As we have seen the substituted doctrine of predestination proved in practice to be no legitimate alternative, but rather, a psychological sophism whereby the reconciliation of world and spirit, was supplanted by a hypocritical maintenance of both. It is not therefore a case of Calvinism condoning or encouraging the worship of Mammon, but rather that it had no genuine influence over man's worldliness. The doctrine of predestination did not in effect modify his attitude to the material world; on the contrary, it released him from all spiritual qualification. If then there was a special relationship between Calvinism and capitalism, I would suggest that it existed as an aspect of that state of mind to which Holy Willie and many other creations of post-Reformation Scottish literature bear witness.

So, if the answer to the question "what maks the mighty differ" between the elect and the damned is, not a lot, in terms of their respective failings, Burns' poetry would suggest that it is a great deal in terms of their respective virtues, and that in favour of the damned. Throughout his poetry, Burns is the champion of common humanity, and always the virtue upon which he rests his justification of that humanity is the precise antithesis of the hypocrisy by which the Unco Guid assure themselves, that is to say — honesty. The examples are too numerous to quote, but they come easily to mind, for if there are two words which sum up the pre-occupations of Burns' poetry, they are perhaps hypocrisy on the negative side, and honesty on the positive. A few instances will indicate the point:

For/

For thus the royal Mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
'The social, friendy, honest man,
'Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfills great Nature'splan,
'And none but he.

(Second Epistle to J Lapraik)

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge, an' malice fause
He'll still disdain,
An ' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

(To the Rev John M'Math)

The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.
(For a' that and a' that.)

Such was the philosophy of life which Burns asserted in the teeth of the religious tradition into which he was born. As I have sought to illustrate, in the face of those circumstances, his response is not as simplistic as it might otherwise seem, for in making it, he completely and precisely overturned the concept of universal reprobation, and the related doctrine of predestination, the central factors in the creation of a profound disharmony in the consciousness of the nation. We must remember also that the wider world in which Burns existed, the world of Voltaire, and then of Rousseau, of the American War of Independence, and then the French Revolution, was one which generally encouraged that faith in humanity which Burns shared and which his poetry expressed superlatively. If, as a philosophy of life, it remained flawed, we must recognize not only that it was promoted by the spirit of the age, but on a much deeper level, it was dictated by the unique nature of the tradition from which the poet emerged.

By creating a dichotomy between the world and the spirit, surmountable only be election, the Calvinist tradition effectively determined that any subsequent defection from that tradition would be/

be deprived of any spiritual dimension. The best that Burns can do towards harmonizing the natural and the spiritual is contained in the truce he pleads for at the close of the "Address to the Unco Guid":

> Who made the heart, 'tis he alone
> Decidedly can try us,
> He knows each cord its various tone,
> Each spring its various bias:
> Then at the balance let's be mute,
> We never can adjust it;
> What's done we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted.

But the grounds for hope which Burns suggests here are based upon reason and upon human sympathy, and it is a hope moreover, which is entirely contradicted by his own religious tradition. The recurring awareness of this contradiction, which we have noted in the gloom of some of the early poems, remained with Burns throughout his life, though it is later to be found most often in prose.[47] The reconciliation of the natural and the spiritual aspect of existence was not possible for Burns because it was contrary to Calvinist theology, and Calvinist theology was the central truth of the Scotland into which he was born. The closest he comes to the attempt, culminating in the proposition that "'An honest man's the noble work of God'", is "The Cotter's Saturday Night", which is often criticized for the elements of sentimentality and forced, artificial language which it contains. I would suggest that these shortcomings are themselves symptoms of the fact that the poem seeks to marry Burns' rational and democratic faith to a religious tradition which in reality precluded such a marriage, and it is thus that the idyll that emerges is of necessity forced, artificial and sentimental. However, while acknowledging the limitations imposed by the dichotomy which I have described, it must be recognized that it was also the essential component of much that Burns did write, and much that Burns did write is, in its own terms,/

terms, unsurpassed. The contradictions with which he was faced are themselves at the heart of many of his epistles and satires, and are also the basis upon which was built his great comic masterpiece, "Tam o' Shanter".

In "Tam o' Shanter", the ambiguity which we noted in the "Address to the Deil", is expanded and dramatized. Is all pleasure the property of the awesome figure of Satan as the Auld Lights averred, and therefore leading straight to Hell? Alternatively, can we by our actions avert perdition? If the latter, then the Satan that the Kirk had rendered synonymous with drink and "cutty sarks", becomes "auld Nick", a part of the human consciousness. If the former, then the pleasures enjoyed by humanity "by an ingle bleezing finely", point directly to the eternal fires in which we will get our "fairin". In "Tam o' Shanter", Auld Light opinion on the matter is maintained by Kate:

> She prophesied that late or soon,
> Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
> Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
> By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

By contrast, the first thing that we are told about her husband is that he is "honest". In the context of the poem, the term is suggestive of an inability to refuse another drink and also, when under the influence of this inability, of a certain ingenuousness in the face of the prophesies of his spouse. Ultimately, however, honesty is, as we have seen, a virtue which distinguishes those who display it from the cant of the predestinarians. At base then, "Tam o' Shanter" is a dramatic, and of course a comic contest between these two conflicting definitions, supervized by a narrator who seeks to be impartial, and conscientiously upholds Kate's case, although in the act of doing so he can hardly conceal a wink, and whose guard collapses altogether/

altogether when he opines on the physical attractions of the dancing witches:

> Now, Tam O Tam! had thae been queans,
> A' plump and strapping in their teens.

For Kate, and in the eyes of the tradition she upholds, pleasure leads straight to the Devil. Tam's supernatural encounter springs directly from the enormities committed of an evening in Ayr after the market:

> Ae market night,
> Tam had got planted unco right;
> Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely
> Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
> And at his elbow, Souter Johnny
> His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
> Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
> They had been fou for weeks thegither.
> The night drave on wi' sang and clatter;
> Any ay the ale was growing better;
> The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
> Wi' favours, secret, sweet and precious:
> The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
> The landlord's laugh was ready chorus;
> The storm outside might rair and rustle,
> Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Tam's experiences at Kirk-Alloway are clearly presaged here. The "bleeze" that illuminates the inn will soon illuminate the coven, and the "sangs and clatter" by the ingle, will later have their ultimate source revealed:

> A winnock-bunker in the east,
> There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
> A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
> To gie them music was his charge.

The predilection introduced by Tam's flirtations with the landlady foreshadow the climax of his terrors at Kirk-Alloway, likewise a result of his readiness to acknowledge the attractions of womankind, and indicative perhaps of the essence of Kate's animosity. Finally, the absolute synonymity of Satan and pleasure which Auld Light attitudes upheld is contained in the parallel between Tam:

> planted unco right;
> Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,

and, in the midst of the "bleezing" kirkyard, the ultimate master of ceremonies:

> A winnock-bunker in the east,
> There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast.

At the close of the scene in the inn, the hostility of the elements is introduced, the fact that there is a "storm without" which Tam will all too soon have to face. It is worth noting that the term "storm" is first mentioned at the close of the poem's introductory section in relation to Kate "gathering her brows like a gathering storm/ Nursing her wrath to keep it warm" and that these lines are given added significance by the statement that follows: "This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter". It is almost as if Kate has laid a predestinarian curse, creating the conditions in which Tam will indeed be:

> ... catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
> By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

For Burns indeed, the sentence of reprobation which traditional Calvinism laid upon all but the elect, and the damnable consequences which this placed upon the ordinary pleasures of existence, represented just such a curse. Here as elsewhere, his response to the Calvinist proposition that human pleasures are Satanic is to suggest, by way of comedy, the logical reversal, that the Deil is only human:

> ... Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,
> And though his very een enrich'd;
> Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
> And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:
> Till first ae caper, syne anither,
> Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
> And roars out, 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
> And in an instant all was dark.

This reversal is made possible by the further proposition that predestined reprobation can be averted. The significance of the poem's climax lies in the fact that it completely thwarts Kate's prophesy, and by extension, the curse of Auld Light theology:/

theology:

> Ae spring brought off her master hale,
> But left behind her ain grey tail.

In the closing admonition, the narrator again adopts the tone of Kate's party, though they are of course at the same time subverted by the scale of the disaster:

> Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
> Ilk man and mother's son take heed:
> Whene'er to drink you are inclined,
> Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
> Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
> Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

At the same time, however, the thought of "Tam o' Shanter's mare" totally confounds the Calvinist view of life. By her efforts, the faithful Maggie enables her master, like the "bardie" to "turn a corner jinkan", and defy the laws of predestination. If the warning with which the poem closes is at all serious, which it almost certainly is not, it is in pointing out that everything has its price. However, the price is such as to fundamentally deny the eternal damnation which the Auld Lights would seek to impose.

Here again then, Burns throws in his lot with common humanity, and if the intellectual impulses which had emerged in Scotland by the mid-eighteenth century encouraged this, it was in any case the natural source to which the long dormant poetic imagination would turn. As the Scottish literary tradition had lapsed into silence with the rise of Calvinism, which denied its reconciliatory function, it was in the popular poetry that the common people of Scotland had maintained, that the poet of the eighteenth century revival found his native roots. The limitations which this implies I will speak of in a moment. Firstly, I must make mention of that area of Burns' achievement in which this heritage was most directly employed, the songs.

The natural impulses which Calvinism condemned nonetheless/

nonetheless continued to be celebrated, perhaps more surreptitiously, but without interruption, in the folk tradition of the people. In his poetry, Burns defended those impulses and asserted their value. In the songs, he took part in the folk tradition directly, expressing the perennial interests of the natural man, love and liberty, freedom and fun, on the level of genius. If Burns' work in general has an appeal which is exceptionally universal, it is because of his brilliant treatment of such universal themes, and if his songs are the essence of that appeal, it is because the songs present the most immediate impression of these, fundamental human feelings. Indeed, so direct are these lyrical statements that they cannot really be assessed by reference to the word alone, in isolation from the music, the effect being contained only in the totality. We must acknowledge, however, that in song writing, as in satire, in comic narrative, in the verse epistle, Burns' contribution to the genre places him among the very greatest practitioners in the field.

Having said this, it seems churlish indeed to speak of limitations. The fact is that such limitations exist not in what Burns wrote, but in what he could not write. A degree of personality may be involved, as Christina Keith would suggest, but the present study would indicate that the essential features of Burns' poetry are consistent with, and illustrative of, the psychological history of post-Reformation Scotland. The simplicity which is also the excellence of the songs, is but the crystallization of the psychological restrictions pertaining in post-Calvinist Scotland. Of course, given the nature of so many of the poems, every interpretation of Burns of necessity acknowledges the importance of the Calvinist legacy. However, while I would not claim the specific understanding of those who have made full and comprehensive studies of the poet, the present context does facilitate the/

the integration of the particular features discernible in the poetry of Burns with the general factors which have emerged in this study, which in turn may render those particulars more comprehensible.

In the present study, I have sought to illustrate that the unique and crucial factor determining the nature of post-Reformation Scotland, was the loss of the reconciliatory principle. In its absence, Calvinist theology became, unavoidably, absolute in its spiritual demands, and therefore regardless of human fallibility. With the subsidence of the conviction of sainthood in a New Jerusalem which had initially promoted this development, fallibility rendered the resultant atmosphere one of spiritual pessimism, made sufferable only by the virtue of resignation, and conducive to the dubious solution which Holy Willie personifies. The further consequence which this situation implies, is that any subsequent attempt to formulate a basis by which to live, and in the conditions I have described, some such formulation was clearly required, could only take place in direct contradiction of the existing religious tradition which, in its absolutism could accommodate no modification. As a result of this, the various definitions of life assumed by Burns' generation, and the generations that have followed have been, in effect, deprived of any spiritual endorsement. There remains spiritual hope of course, but it is a hope that finds no foundation in the dominant influence on the post-Reformation tradition. The character of Burns' poetry confirms this. It will be recalled that a grey mare occurs in Henryson's poetry as well as in that of Burns:

> This mere is men of contemplatioun,
> Off pennance walkand in this wildernace.[48]

Here, directly and by extension, Henryson invokes a tangible structure through which world and spirit can be reconciled. By comparison, the/

the effort by which Maggie saves Tam o' Shanter from the jaws of predestination is no more than a hope, beyond which the post-Calvinist Scottish consciousness, and post-Calvinist poetry remain marooned on the level of temporal considerations. The extent to which Burns' concerns have come to be defined as "typically Scottish" is indicative of the fact that they are part of a general heritage, as are the limitations which that heritage imposed.

This then is the essential condition which I would suggest qualifies Burns' achievement. I can sympathize with A Burns Jamieson in his attempts at reconciliation when he says of Burns that:

> His democratic creed is, of course, bound up with his religion and is in harmony with the view of Knox and the Covenanters. This is too often forgotten by those who unjustly attack Calvinism.[49]

Certainly, the citation of the particular and the extreme is too easily made by the anti-Calvinist, and is assumed to explain all, where in fact it explains very little. However, whether or not the democratic impulse is a legacy of the reformers, and in the present context I am not concerned to dispute the fact, the sad truth remains that in as much as Calvinism was first and foremost a religion, an interpretation of the spiritual, centred upon reprobation and predestination, it remained, and remains, at total odds with the direction taken by Burns and the majority of those who have come after him, although the temporality of that direction was determined by the absolutism of Calvinist spirituality.

As we have seen, it was actually out of this dichotomy that Burns created great poetry. In the wake of the Calvinist era there was much to be said, and in his poetry Burns memorably said a great deal. He bearded those who sought to uphold the life-sapping tenets of traditional Calvinism with a brilliance which left them permanently/

permanently discredited, while seeking to achieve a positive definition of life by asserting the natural impulses that the Auld Lights had condemned, incorporating, and finding support in, the hopes encouraged by the spirit of rationalism and nascent democracy. If the areas of existence which concern Burns were purely a matter of personal choice, rather than being, in any case, dictated by the conditions I have described, then we would probably not be speaking of his limitations at all. However, the extent to which Scottish poetry stood still after Burns, the extent to which, until our own century, the matter of Burns' poetry became synonymous with Scottish poetry, is indicative of the fact that the matter of his poetry was dictated. This being so, the possibility of other Scottish writers treating areas of existence absent from Burns' poetry, thereby moving towards the creation of an imaginative whole, did not exist, for they too would be imprisoned within the temporal. Thus, when we speak of Burns' limitations, we are speaking of the limitations of post-Calvinist Scotland. David Daiches (p.173) describes Burns as being the last expression of a centuries old literary tradition. Obviously, in the context of the present study, I would disagree with this. In such terms, the essence of the pre-Reformation literary tradition, that is the reconciliation of all the aspects of human existence, temporal and spiritual, was extinguished by the wholly antagonistic definition of life at the centre of Calvinist theology, more than a century before Burns' birth. The fact that Burns' own poetry cannot embody this quality divides him from the earlier tradition on the most fundamental level. In a sense, however, Professor Daiches' definition is illuminating, in that for a long period after Burns, Scottish poetry does seem to be at an end. But it is in the sense that in a post-Calvinist Scotland, isolated to an exceptional degree within the material, Fergusson and/

and Burns seemed to have covered a great deal of the ground that remained to the poetic imagination.

Great as the achievement of the eighteenth century revival was, the attempts to find in it a whole response to existence are unconvincing. As we have seen, Burns Jamieson sought to reconcile Burns' poetry and the Kirk on the basis of the democratic principle, presumably in the hope that this embodied some sort of reconciliation of the spirit and the world. In reality, however, this is at complete odds with the theology of Calvinism. Again, Gregory Smith, in a famous essay suggested that post-Calvinist materialism finds its complement in such fantastic flights as are contained in "Tam o' Shanter".[50] In an equally famous, and to some notorious essay, Edwin Muir refuted this, and it is difficult to disagree with his conclusions on this point:

> I should not have devoted so much space to this fantastic poetry, if it were not that Gregory Smith's generalization attribited so much importance to it, and that Scottish criticism has ever since tended extravagantly to over-estimate it. Gregory Smith found in this vein of fantasy the compensating quality which offset what he called the Scottish "maudlin affection for the commonplace," which we may regard as an expression of Scottish materialism. He has an uneasy feeling that the Scots are a materialistic people, as all intelligent Scotsmen must have; and he wished to prove that they are not so materialistic as they seem, indeed that they are absurdly impractical and irresponsible, gay and illogical flouters of the material world. He acknowledged, on the other hand, that they often returned to that world after these excursions and explained their behaviour in terms perfectly acceptable to it; but he did not draw the obvious conclusion from this fact. A hundred years ago Heine saw that sentimentality was the other face of materialism; but materialism has many faces. Scottish fantastic poetry is a natural recoil from a "maudlin affection for the commonplace," but it has no peculiar virtue beyond its naturalness. It is not a genuine complement to Scottish home-spun poetry, completing and fulfilling it, but merely a temporary reaction bringing us back/

> back to the point where we started.
> ... The response of the Makars and the Balladists to experience was a whole response; the response of fantastic poetry is a joke followed by an explanation.[51]

It should be recalled immediately that "Tam o' Shanter" is a very great poem. Moreover, I believe, as I indicated when speaking of the poem, that its internal logic includes a more considered treatment of the Scottish dilemma than Muir's comments allow on this occasion. Nevertheless, at base his conclusion that such flights contain no solution is correct. In this study, I have sought to indicate that the source of the materialism which both Gregory Smith and Muir agree upon is itself the barrier to the whole response which both of them seek. It is a result of the dichotomy between the spiritual and the material which overtook the Scottish consciousness in the post-Reformation era, a dichotomy which came into being with the loss of the principle of reconciliation upon which the ability of the "Makars and the Balladists" to contemplate as a complex unity everything in and under heaven had been founded. To recognize that the poets of the eighteenth century revival share in these debilitating circumstances is not to criticize. It is simply to point out that their poetry expresses the psychological condition of the nation, and it does not detract from the brilliance with which it was expressed.

Chapter VII:
The Nineteenth Century Crisis

In the preceding pages I have sought to illustrate the achievement of the poets of Scotland's eighteenth century poetical revival, and also the limits placed upon that achievement by the situation in which they found themselves, a situation brought about by the uniquely severe psychological trauma which the nation had suffered in the course of the previous two hundred years. The recognition of these limitations and their cause is of the greatest importance in the context of the present study. However, this is not intended in any way to diminish the value of the poetry. The extent of the achievement of Scotland's eighteenth century poets remains immense. In terms of Scottish literature our debt to them is inestimable, their efforts amounting to nothing less than the resuscitation of the very concept of Scottish literature.

Moreover, in the field of western European literature in general, their influence was of real importance. The Scottish poetic revival, drawing as it did upon the perennial poetry of the Scottish people, contributed more than a little to the process by which western Europe found release from the linguistic and stylistic straightjacket which neo-classicism had imposed. Wordsworth's lines upon the death of Burns have a significance far beyond that of a personal tribute. They indicate precisely the lesson which Burns' poetry taught, at a time when the import of that lesson had become obscured. In teaching it afresh, Scottish poetry did much to promote the poetic revolution which was to follow, a revolution of which Wordsworth himself was a seminal force:

> I mourned with thousands, but as one
> More deeply grieved, for He was gone
> Whose/

Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.[1]

- (At the Grave of Burns 1803)

Clearly, the assimilation of this lesson was a vital feature of the Romantic Revolution:

> The principle object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associated ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended and more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature, etc.[2]

Here, as elsewhere in Wordsworth's Preface, we can see the effects of that lesson which the English poet acknowledged in his tribute "At the Grave of Burns". However, the above extract also indicates an awareness of implications of which Scottish poetry itself was not at all conscious. The reasons for this have been discussed at length. The result, was that Romanticism in the deepest sense failed to penetrate the Scottish consciousness, and the literary revolution which embodied it found no Scottish expression. The lesson which/

which Burns' poetry taught was invaluable. But the assertion of "humble truth" alone was not the end of the exercise outlined above. Were it so, Burns would stand at the centre of the movement. Rather, however, the Romantic Revival demanded that imaginative effort by which, through the medium of "ordinary things" the "primary laws of our nature" might be discerned.

There is nothing of this in Burns, nor in the work of the Scottish poets who came after him, which is to say that Scotland remained untouched by the essential spirit of a movement which sprang from the perception of:

> ..... those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;
> Blank misgivings of a Creature
> Moving about in worlds not realised,
> High instincts before which our mortal
> Nature
> Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
> But for those first affections,
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what the may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
> Are yet the master-light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power
> to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the
> being
> Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
> To perish never:
> Which neither listlessness, nor mad
> endeavour,
> Nor Man nor Boy,
> Nor all that is at emnity with joy,
> Can utterly abolish or destroy![3]

What is being asserted here is what I would suggest to be the profundity at the heart of the multifarious revolution which we call Romanticism. It is not simply the celebration of "humble truth", but rather the imagination's perception of the infinity which such truth implies. This is to say that the core of the movement is the resurrection of a comprehension of the inter-relationship between/

between human life and a wider, spiritual dimension. I shall discuss such matters more fully in a later chapter. For the present, I am concerned only with the extent to which the poetic revival of eighteenth century Scotland related to, and how far it differed from, the Romantic Movement which followed. Essentially then, the answer to this is that the Scottish poets opened a door through which, as a result of circumstances which I have described at length, they were themselves unable to pass. In re-asserting the value of the basic factors of human existence, the Scottish poets contributed much. But they could not themselves recognize that the depth of that value lay in the fact that human existence has a spiritual dimension, nor that the reconciliation of that existence with its own spirituality, was the ultimate calling of the poetic imagination.

This inability is all the more ironic when we consider that Scotland also supplied a basic but tremendously powerful precedent for just such a poetic function, with the discovery by a wide and literate audience of the great Scottish Ballads. Both directly and derivatively, the work of Burns, Scott and Hogg, together with that of Bishop Thomas Percy (1729-1811), whose Reliques of Ancient Poetry was published in 1765, did much to convey the spirit of the great Ballad tradition at large, and in doing so, made an important contribution to the imagination's release from an age of classicism and rationalism.

The oral tradition which produced the Ballads had existed side by side with the literary achievements of the medieval poets, and intrinsic to it was that vision of man in relation to a wider universe which the literary poets went on to reflect upon and formulate. I do not have the space on this occasion to deal satisfactorily with the Ballads, nor to discuss them in relation to this, their essential/

essential quality. However, it is the case that no-one who resorts to the Ballads themselves can possibly remain unaware of it, as one or two random extracts will show:[4]

'O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,
That the sun shines sweetly on?'
'O yon are the hills of heaven,' he said,
'Where you will never win.'

'O whaten mountain is yon,' she said,
'All so dreary wi frost and snow?'
'O yon is the mountain of hell,' he cried,
'Where you and I will go.'

James Harris
(The Demon Lover)

It fell about the Martinmas,
When nights are lang and mirk,
The carlin wife's three sons cam hame,
And their hats were o' the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh;
But at the gates o' Paradise
That birk grew fair eneugh.

The Wife of Usher's Well

'O see not ye yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi' thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho after it but few enquires.'

'And see not ye yon braid braid road,
That lies across yon lily leven
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven.'

'And see not ye that bonny road,
Which winds about the ferny brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland
Where you and I this night maun gae.'

Thomas Rymer

In the above examples, the scope of the universe which the Ballads occupy is indicated directly. But the implicit presence of this same universe pervades the entire tradition, and is the source of its underlying power. Everywhere, the fact that things have a significance beyond the actuality of events is assumed, in Sir Patrick Spens for instance:

'Late/

'Late late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi' the auld moone in her arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme.'

in Edward:

'The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Mither, mither,
The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Sic counseils ye gave to me O.'

in The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry:

'An' thu sall marry a proud gunner,
An' a proud gunner I'm sure he'll be,
An' the very first schot that ere he schoots,
He'll schoot baith my young son and me.'

The examples could easily be multiplied. The conclusion, is that on an unself-conscious level, the Ballads share with the literary poetry of the Middle Ages what we have already seen called "a whole response to experience"[5] and central to that response is the recognition of human life as an inter-relationship of the temporal and the spiritual.

When the forms and symbols which had supported such a vision of life were rejected, the literature which had expressed it was lost in the process. However, on a non-reflective level, the Ballads continued to treat existence in the context of an enduring cosmos. Here it may be asked why this should be so, especially in a nation which I have described as being purged of any such vision to a unique extent. The answer to this lies in the non-literate nature of the tradition in which the Ballads had their being.

The continuation of the Ballad tradition was directly reliant upon this, as the demise of that tradition, and of the consciousness which it had expressed, relates directly to the ever expanding progress of literate society. This point is made of course wherever the Ballads are discussed, often accompanied by the famous remark made by the mother of James Hogg to Sir Walter Scott that the Ballads/

Ballads "were made for singing no' for reading" and that in writing them down, Sir Walter Scott had "broken the charm".[6] However, I make the point on the present occasions for different reasons. Too often the statement is made simply because later history seems to corroborate its truth, on the assumption that nothing more need be said.

Of course this is not entirely the case. Indeed, it is less so in the field of Ballad study than in most areas of Scottish literary criticism. Foremost in that field is the work of Dr David Buchan in his revelatory examination of the process of creativity in a non-literate society.[7] It is also true, as Sir James Fergusson long ago pointed out, that the finality of the written word, within which, in the course of the eighteenth century, the Ballads came to be defined, was completely contrary to the fluidity of that oral tradition.[8] Moreover, the situation was further complicated by specifically Scottish linguistic complexities. In relation to these, Maurice Lindsay pertinently cites David Daiches' statement that "A literary language, arising out of the different forms of the spoken language and transcending them, reflects back upon the spoken language and gives it a steady relationship to the national culture",[9] and goes on to point out that "The literary language reflecting back to the spoken by the end of the seventeenth century was English, the language of Alexander, Drummond and Ayton."[10]

All these statements are valid, and they indicate, as I myself have indicated, that the Ballad tradition could not survive within the context of a literate society. However, in the above instances, the nature of this incompatibility is discussed essentially in terms of the divergent use of language in a non-literate and in a literate context. On the present occasion, it is my intention rather to draw attention to the fundamentally different visions of existence which this linguistic incompatibility contained.

I have already illustrated that the enduring presence at the heart of the Ballad tradition, is the assumption that human existence has its being in the context of a permanent and universal cosmos. On the other hand, a considerable part of the present study has been devoted to the illustration and explanation of the fact of the demise of any such consciousness in the mind of the literate Scottish society in the post-Reformation period. The lingering presence of this awareness within the Ballad tradition, albeit on a non-reflective level, was in fact facilitated by the non-literate nature of that tradition. The reason for this, is that the very process by which life is viewed in a non-literate world implies such a consciousness. By this I mean that the process is intrinsically symbolic, a fact which is exemplified both in the instances I have cited, and indeed throughout the Ballad tradition. Now such symbolism is itself the vehicle which places the particulars of the Ballad story within the context of the permanent and universal. It was thus that the Ballad tradition maintained this property, a property which indeed remains the essential feature of the tradition. So too, the failure of that tradition relates directly to its confrontation with the literate society of eighteenth century Scotland. It failed, because the consciousness of that society had long since diminished to an extent which rendered it incapable of re-absorbing this peculiar property which the Ballad tradition contained, far less, of bringing to it that quality of reflection which the medieval poet had once supplied.

Thus, the vision of life which the oral tradition had once shared with the medieval Scottish poet, remained implicit within the confines of that tradition, long after it had been eradicated from the mainstream of the country's consciousness and culture. When, in the eighteenth century, this power which the Ballads had maintained/

maintained was released upon a literary world reacting against its subjection to the tenets of scientific rationalism, it supported the renewed need stirring within the literary poet, to reflect once more upon all that it implied. In this, the Scottish Ballad tradition contributed to what I have suggested to be the Romantic Revival in the profoundest sense.[11] I mean by this, in the sense in which it represented a re-examination and re-assertion of man's place in a permanent and universal context beyond that of his material time and place, after some two hundred years during which such considerations had been variously obscured. Ironically, the psychological severities experienced in that period by the country that actually produced the Ballads, precluded any such re-awakening.

Though it was largely through the medium of Scottish writers that the immensely influential Ballads were released, these writers could not themselves, given the unique debilitation which the previous two centuries had wrought upon the Scottish psyche, re-assimilate the vision of life which the oral tradition implied. On other levels of course, Burns, and more especially Scott, were greatly influenced by the oral tradition. They responded sympathetically to the atmosphere of the tradition, and it is indeed fortunate that the inevitable finalization of the Ballads in print was so often effected by men who, possessed of such a sympathy, sought to achieve the stylistic terms by which that atmosphere could be conveyed. On occasion, as with "Proud Maisie" Scott successfully carried something of the essential matter of the originals into his own poetry:

> Proud Maisie is in the wood,
> Walking so early;
> Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
> Singing so rarely.
>
> "Tell/

'Tell me though bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?'
'When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.'

'Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie say truly?'
'The grey-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.'

'The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.
The owl from the steeple sing,
Welcome, proud lady.'[12]

However, the regularity with which the above poem is cited is indicative of the rarity of the occasions on which Scott achieves the Ballad voice. In some respects he conveys its atmosphere more effectively in prose, as for example in Wandering Willie's Tale in Redgauntlet. However, the prose medium is itself an aspect of his function as antiquarian recorder; the Ballad universe cannot be re-created although the folk traditions can be successfully exploited.[13] The central implications of that universe do not figure in Scott's achievement. Similarly, Burns, while producing fine versions of Ballads, for example, "Tam Lin", was in no way influenced by their deeper implications. As we have seen, Burns' own poetry has its precedents in the popular folk tradition, and but for such comic flights as "Tam o' Shanter", he remains with that tradition but totally unlike the Ballad tradition, within the confines of his material world.

What emerges then, is that the essential quality of the Ballads, which elsewhere supported the impulses which fed the Romantic Revolution failed to penetrate the Scottish consciousness, and that is is synonymous with the fact that the Romantic Revolution itself did not notably affect or alter the direction of Scottish life and culture. This being so, that life and culture maintained a course which remained to an exceptional degree in thrall to the dictates of material existence. Of course a great deal can be achieved within such a culture, as/

as indeed we have seen in the cases of Fergusson and Burns. In the wider field of learning, rationalism and scientific materialism had dominated European thought for over a century, with Scotland, significantly, one of the brightest jewels in the crown of Enlightenment. However, existence dictated by such a code remained of necessity incomplete. The search for a total vision of human life requires the acknowledgement of its spiritual dimension, and the reconciliation of material existence to that spirituality. The realization of the need for this qualification of the Age of Reason was, I would suggest, the impulse at the heart of the Romantic Revival. That it failed to evolve in Scotland is testimony to the fact that the forces militating against the re-discovery of such a vision of existence were far more deeply rooted than that excessive devotion to rationalism which elsewhere the Romantic Movement sought to counter-balance.

If, in the field of nineteenth century Scottish literature, we are to look for the attempt at analysis of the national consciousness, we must look beyond the scope of the present study. It was not in poetry but in prose that the task was undertaken, to such an extent indeed that it is the feature which pre-eminently distinguishes and connects all the major figures of nineteenth century fiction. Such matters are invariably central to any discussions of the subject:

> ... in Scottish fiction ... one can see that the pattern of cultural and social division of the eighteenth century, with all the attendant religious and political divisions to reinforce polarisation, still operate; but with changing emphases. With the added complexities of economic and industrial change, the more obvious divisions of the eighteenth century, between the vernacular tradition in poetry and the polite "enclave" culture of the literati in Edinburgh, between a factual culture, the scientific culture of the "head" and the irresponsible Edinburgh culture of the "heart", oppositions taking place on geographical, linguistic, or class grounds, give/

> give way to an increasing awareness on the serious writer's part of division within the Scottish mind; internal rather than external. Now the major fiction tries to express uneasy tensions between two kinds of Scotland, and two opposing ways of looking at Scotland. Scott sets ancient Disorder, romance, imagination and feeling against new, rational Order, with its Baillie Nicol Jarvie desire for commercial rather than romantic attributes. This "characteristic tension"[14] runs through all his major fiction; so much so that the novels are best seen as extended metaphors for the dissociation in Scotland of thought and feeling, materialism and imagination, repression and sensitivity. Scott does this by opposing groups, in Waverly (1814) or Redgauntlet (1824) each representing a side of the dissociation; or via "insipid" heroes, each torn between the warring aspects of Scotland and Scottish character.[15]

It would be possible to go too far in stressing Scott's concern with "division within the Scottish mind" beyond the fact that the geographical, historical and cultural oppositions with which he deals are themselves an internal heritage. Nevertheless, there is certainly a degree of accuracy in Francis Russell Hart's opinion that:

> The mutual fascinations in Scott are not really intercultural at all, and not between opposing epochs. They are the same in every age, and they are between moral and physical poles, the meek but brave civility of moderation and the noble energy of monomania, the enlightened pragmatic and the barbaric idealist, Sancho and Quixote. And in every age, says the ironic Stendhal, "the base Sancho Panza wins." At least on a conscious ideological level Scott evidently stood with Sancho and pragmatic civility. It is equally evident, as Scott sensed, that a semi-conscious attraction to the charisma of the monomaniac, the demonic freedom of the anti-empirical absolutist reveals itself. Scott had a penchant for Gothic outlaws, humorous Jacobites, and fanatical Covenanters. That such figures are historicized into representative anachronisms, sometimes seems little more than Scott's way of authenticating them - a familiarly Scottish way - and of saying that they are more ancient, more "given". What they really represent is pre-enlightenment persistence, a demonic element, in the human inheritance, to be sought out, exorcised, and not superficially denied or perilously overlooked. History itself is suspect. The absolutes of theological romance may be more basic.[16]

I shall return to these interpretations in a moment, having first acknowledged that the themes which they attribute to Scott are likewise central to all the major fiction writers of the century. If, beyond historical and geographical confrontation Scott seeks to purge a "demonic element", James Hogg (1770-1835) throughout his work and most famously in his Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), approaches the business more directly, investigating, as I have termed it, the dark conclusions of the distortions which the doctrine of predestination released, and which Burns treated satirically in "Holy Willie's Prayer". The relationship of John Galt (1779-1839) to such matters is less obvious. As with Scott, he was conscious that his age marked a division between past and present of abnormal severity, in that an entire way of life was expiring. For Galt more than for Scott, however, this seems to be a process of almost unmitigated loss, not of nobility and romance, but of the sense of personal and communal identity which he recognized in Scottish village life and which he chronicles in some of his finest work - Annals of the Parish (1821), The Provost (1822). It should be noted that Galt was himself a predestinarian.[17] However, the tone of his writing is suggestive of the extent to which that doctrine was now reduced from universal truth to personal opinion, opinion which could co-exist kindly - Balwhidder, the keeper of the parish annals, records his approval of English Quakers, and even tolerates the saying of Mass - in a manner which would once have been considered a betrayal of the Covenants. While one can only admire Galt's controlled portrayal of the way of life he mourns, and indeed acknowledge its utter superiority to the anonymity of the modern world by which it is destroyed, there must remain reservations as to the adequacy of the reality, a reality which in lesser men would prompt the creation of/

of the literature of the "Kailyard". More directly related to the themes we are concerned with is Ringan Gilhaize (1823). Galt intended a reply to Scott's Old Mortality by treating the same period of national strife in a manner more sympathetic to the Covenanters. Nevertheless, the hero's conviction of his role as avenging angel in destroying the Satanic figure of Claverhouse, a conviction which Galt modifies by the suggestion of temporary madness,[18] effectively conveys sufficient of the absolutism of Calvinist spirituality, and of the resultant divisions, for the novel to be placed in relationship to the central features of Scottish fiction in the period. Finally, the exposition of divided consciousness in terms of familial division in The Entail (1823), looks forward to Stevenson's The Master of Ballantrae (1889) and Weir of Hermiston (1896) as well as George Douglas's House with the Green Shutters (1901).

On this occasion I can only touch upon the great achievement of the nineteenth century fiction writers in passing. I wish only to illustrate that the themes which they share relate directly to the major features of Scottish life and literature with which the present study is concerned. I have said that the essential impulse of the Romantic Movement failed to penetrate the Scottish consciousness. Clearly, many of the factors which distinguish that movement distinguish the work of Scott and Hogg, and in these terms they are major contributors to Romanticism, just as later in the century the concerns of Scottish fiction in many ways reflect the wider concerns of the age. I would suggest, however, that the specifically Scottish response to the wider impulses are themselves illustrative of specifically Scottish problems, problems which, as I have said, rendered the country immune to the essential re-definition which Romanticism attempted. Both similarities and differences are implicit in the interpretations that I have cited.

I have said that Romanticism sought to re-state the spiritual, and to reconcile it with material existence. Douglas Gifford points to the Scottish expression of this re-statement when he speaks of Scott setting "imagination and feeling" against "rational order". However, the fact that the whole tenor of his discussion centres round the problem of division, on the fact that these opposites are mutually incompatible and cannot co-exist, is indicative of the peculiarities of the Scottish situation, even if the fundamental cause which takes the Scottish dilemma beyond that which faced Romanticism in general remains unclear. Francis Russell Hart speaks of the poles of this division in terms of Sancho Panza and Don Quixote. In fact, the opposition of the mundane and the idealistic, the material and the spiritual which this suggests more accurately describes the situation elsewhere, a situation in which the possibility of co-existence is not, after all, precluded. The unique nature of the Scottish condition lies in the manner in which it differs from this, in the fact that while the mundane material is felt to be inadequate, there exists, not a spiritual complement, but "a demonic element ... in the human inheritance, to be sought out", and "exorcised". The reason for this, I would suggest, is to be found in the dichotomy between world and spirit with which the Calvinist tradition afflicted the Scottish consciousness, and in the resultant synonymity which this created between the human and the diabolical. We may say therefore, that in raising these dark forces, nineteenth century fiction, in common with the spirit of the time, acknowledged that the material alone was not sufficient. However, their demonic nature, the fact that they are to be purged, is at once a testimony to the absence of any solution, and to the continuation of unresolved division.

To return for a moment to Henrysonian terms, European man had in the course of the eighteenth century come to place his faith in the autonomy of the "taill". The emergence of the Romantic Movement was a re-assertion of the "moralitas" and therefore of the need for the "taill" and the "moralitas" to inter-relate once more. It is significant that this rediscovery was made essentially by the poet. The poetic imagination must by its nature revolt against a subjection to materialism, being by its very existence the assertion of a further dimension.

In Scotland, the polarisation between "taill" and "moralitas" was total. While this was initially effected with the desired end of elevating the "moralitas" to absolute sovereignity, human imperfection denied this end, and, given the totality of the divorce between world and spirit, an existence which could not be defined entirely in terms of the "moralitas" could only be defined entirely in terms of the "taill". While in practice the responses of this situation were many and varied, the presence of the dichotomy meant that the attempt to maintain the interests of both world and spirit was the struggle to maintain a condition of perpetual contradiction. This being so, the ultimate result of the failure of the spirit absolute, was the emergence of a state of exceptionally isolated materialism. Whereas elsewhere the inter-relationship of "taill" and "moralitas" ebbed and flowed, in Scotland the concept of any such inter-relationship had been long ago destroyed.

The effect of this destruction continued into nineteenth century Scotland, which, as a result, remained detached from the essential qualification which was elsewhere being brought to bear upon material society. Having said this, the achievement of nineteenth century Scottish fiction remains exceptional. If the psychological dilemma could not be resolved, its definition provided a rich source for the/

the imagination to tackle. However, elsewhere, both in prose and in poetry, the divided state of the Scottish consciousness received more negative testimony. I have said that the wellspring of the Romantic qualification was the poetic imagination, in that functioning unimpeded, the poetic imagination is itself an expression of man's existence in a context beyond that of his material condition. A basic expression of the continuing debilitation of the Scottish consciousness, is therefore the continuing debilitation of Scottish poetry in the nineteenth century.

If, as I have suggested, materialism unqualified was particularly the feature which continued to dominate Scotland in the nineteenth century, then this would of course manifest itself in the directions of Scottish achievement in that period. This is indeed the case, as is the fairly obvious fact that a society with such priorities is not the natural breeding ground of the poet:

> Scotland has had her glorious ages of poetry, in Gaelic, in Latin, in Scots. But in the later nineteenth century the main energies of the Scottish psyche flowed, not into verse, but rather into religious missionary workwith David Livingstone, into Empire-building with Lord Dalhousie, into capitalism with Andrew Carnegie, into socialism with Keir Hardie, into scientific invention, medicine, journalism, bureaucracy, golf, engineering, distilling, into a hundred activities humdrum or humanitarian that are not intimately dependent on the pith and marrow of words as is poetry.[19]

A highly materialistic society is not one conducive to the poetic imagination as I have described it. Having said this, however, the predilections of the age do not themselves sufficiently explain the failure of the poetic imagination. An intense materialism in its many forms was after all the oustanding feature of nineteenth century life throughout the developed world. Elsewhere, literature/

literature continued to defy the dictates of the age, such defiance being indeed central to the major writers of the period. I shall illustrate this in a later chapter, but recourse to the literature itself should make the point abundantly clear. In Scotland, this was not the case. Nineteenth century Scotland was content for the most part to indulge in verse exercises steeped in that sentimentality which Edwin Muir, quoting Heine, saw as being "the other face of materialism",[20] and therefore existing totally within the confines of that materialism. The following lines, far from being exceptional, are typical of verse which was produced in such vast quantity as to testify to the fact that it did indeed supply the needs of the "other face" of nineteenth century Scottish materialism:

> My cantie hame! its roof o' strae,
> Aneath yon thorn I see -
> Yon cozie hame that couthie keeps
> My wife and bairnies three:
> There's green girse roun' my cottage sma'
> An' by it rins a stream,
> Which ever sings a bonnie sang
> To glad my cantie hame.[21]

Of course better work than this was produced. Above all, there is the high craftsmanship which marks the verse of Robert Louis Stevenson. However, even his superiority is a matter of style, hardly at all of content:

> A mile an' a bittock, a mile or twa,
> Abune the burn, ayont the law
> Davie an' Donal an' Charlie an' a'
> An' the moon was shinin' clearly!
>
> Ane went hame wi' the ither, an' then
> The ither went hame wi' the ither twa men,
> An' baith wad return him the service again,
> An' the moon was shinin' clearly.[22]

The reason for all this cannot simply be explained by the facts of nineteenth century materialism, as chronicled by Douglas Young (226). As I have pointed out, such facts were not uniquely Scottish.

What was unique, was the extent to which that materialism went unchallenged by the poetic imagination, which given that the poetic imagination innately presents such a challenge, is to say that it found no true expression in nineteenth century Scotland. The reason for this lies as I have indicated in the divided Scottish consciousness, which in our present period continued to exist, in some respects more absolute than ever.

Often, when nineteenth century Scottish poetry is discussed, one of the principal complaints against it is that it largely consists of sub-Burnsian imitation.[23] In reality, such poetry bears no real resemblance to Burns' work. It treats of country matters and seeks to use the language of the country, but in a way that grossly sentimentalizes both. All that can be said relating such poetry to Burns is that it marks time in terms of subject matter, but it deals with that subject matter in a manner quite contrary to Burns. However, what this misconception does reveal is the fact that the poetic revival of the eighteenth century had by this time dried up. The reason for this, beyond the materialism of the age and the basic shortage of poetic ability was, I would suggest, that with the imagination's continuing imprisonment within the material due to the unresolved dichotomy, the poetic potential of such a confinement seemed, at least, to be exhausted. Moreover, the tendency towards sentimentalization which this situation perhaps encouraged was further enhanced by the effect of the scientific advances of the period upon a divided consciousness.

The fixed and literal terms of Calvinist theology had since first it achieved dominance created a void between the spiritual ideal and an actuality which was both imperfect and liable to re-definition. The scientific revelations of the nineteenth century, and in/

in particular the discoveries of Charles Darwin[24] drastically accelerated this re-definition, rendering the void between the actuality and the ideal more basic than ever. The credibility of religious assumptions were undermined in direct proportion to the degree to which those assumptions were held in a literal and fundamentalist form. This being so, the crisis of faith which the period brought to bear upon the Scottish consciousness was to an unparalleled extent a national event. The longstanding ailment of that consciousness, the loss of the concept of reconciliation, that is of a viable psychological means of transcending the dichotomy between world and spirit, was in these circumstances brought into inescapable focus. The continuation of that ailment is indicated by the reaction of the Scottish imagination to the crisis.

The sentimentality which characterized much that was written in the period, is in fact an aspect of this situation. It is said to imitate Burns, but as I have indicated, it is a gross sentimentalization of Burns. What for example would he have made of the following?:

O! mony ills we ken thee bie,
  Drinkin' body, blinkin' body;
And fearfu' ills I wat they be,
  Auld drinkin', blinkin' body.
O! mony ills we ken thee bie,
  They tremblin' han' and sunken e'e,
The sad effects o' barley-bree
  Poor drinkin', blinkin' body.[25]

This is a mild example. However, such verse is more than simply sentimentality through lack of poetic discernment. It is that of course. It is also on its own level moralization, what Maurice Lindsay calls "the dogmatic pietism which was to provide so many bad nineteenth century versifiers with a let-out for genuine poetic resolution".[26] This condemnation may be true, but Maurice Lindsay gives no indication as to why it should be so.

The dichotomy which had overshadowed Scottish life since the Reformation period precluded the inter-relationship of world and spirit, and thus restricted the poetic imagination to the material context. The scientific progress of the nineteenth century, externalized this polarization, and rendered it to an unprecedented degree inescapable. Earlier, its existence had destroyed Robert Fergusson, but the more resilient Burns had successfully challenged the "Unco Guid", declared for something akin to Spinoza's God, and got on with the business of everyday life. In the nineteenth century, such a psychological achievement had become far more difficult. The discoveries of that century threatened those who came after Burns, not with the fires of hell, but with the conclusion that human life was devoid of any meaning.

While I have said that the loss of the reconciliatory principle restricted the scope of the Scottish poet to the material, this does not of course mean that he consciously refuted the spiritual, but rather that he had no way of relating to it. In such circumstances, his unfulfilled spiritual needs were on occasion expressed in terms of the sentimental depiction of some rustic past in which the demands of the Calvinist spiritual absolutewere assumed to have been met. Burns himself displayed this trait to an extent in "The Cottar's Saturday Night". Given the division of the Scottish consciousness, no genuine reconciliation was possible, and as a result this tendency produces no genuine expression of the poetic imagination.

The scientific developments of the nineteenth century presented a hitherto unimagined challenge to human spirituality. Where that spirituality had maintained a communion with material existence, it remained capable of transcending the challenge. Given the absolute nature of Scottish theology, and the dichotomy which it created,/

created, neither the Scottish consciousness, nor the poetic imagination, could achieve such a resolution. The response to the scientific challenge which this situation suggested, was a re-assertion of the values of "The Cottar's Saturday Night", one which, as it became more embattled, became more maudlin, and which was duly asserted in great abundance.

Again there are exceptions, and again they are for the most part within the prose medium. Despite the very different nature of their respective responses, at base we can say that the need for the kind of resolution that I have indicated, lies behind the efforts of both Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and George MacDonald (1824-1905). In the previous chapter, I referred to Carlyle's conclusion on Burns that his failure lay in his desire to unite "the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature" (p. 172). This tells us something of Carlyle's own attitude. If, as he thought to be the case, Burns' imagination was tied to the ground by his concern with the "social, friendly, honest man", then it could also be said that Carlyle's own heroic and life-long efforts at re-defining human existence in the modern world in a way which would re-clothe mankind in a spiritual robe, are peculiarly marked by a kind of latter-day spiritual absolutism, which suggests him to be the heir to pious zeal of the early Reformers, and representative of the other side of the Scottish dichotomy from that which the considered to be a fault in Burns. George MacDonald's path towards resolution was essentially a personal one, though his writings have inspired many. A free-thinking religious, MacDonald began as a minister of the Congregational Church and ended up a member of the Church of England. In personal terms, however, his pilgrimage brought him to a mystic conception of divine/

divine grace to which he sought to give form in such phantasy novels as Phantastes (1858), The Golden Key and Lilith (1895), and which he sought to re-introduce to Scottish life in a whole series of novels set in his native country. In some respects MacDonald's solutions are reminiscent of the tendency towards "neo-Origenism", a conviction of universal restoration, which I noted in the preceding chapter.[27] In their very different ways, Carlyle and MacDonald sought to re-establish a spiritual dimension in the face of the materialism of the age. Being Scots their efforts were to a considerable degree dictated by the Calvinist background. Carlyle attempted to resurrect in modern form the spiritual absolutism of the Reformers. MacDonald conceived of a universal benevolence which, as we have seen, was a reaction which the Calvinist tradition prompted. Both are important figures of the modern world in that both sought to re-assert the spiritual in the face of the peculiar disadvantage that they shared, in that they sprung from a tradition uniquely deprived of the framework to support their efforts. They sought to make a positive response. Elsewhere, the expression of dilemma in poetry and in prose, was again a much more negative affair.

The retreat into the "cantie" and the "couthie" which I have described in terms of poetry, was also of course to result in an entire "Kailyard School" of fiction. This reaction, the literature of the kailyard, represented no reconciliation but rather the attempt to maintain double standards, not only in the face of internal contradiction, but in reaction against the objections raised on all sides by the modern world. In a way it supplied the "other face of Capitalism", but if we consider the psychological history of post-Reformation Scotland, it is perhaps not altogether just to dismiss the attempt simply as a piece of conscious smugness. As I pointed out in an earlier context,[28] the/

the eradication of the concept of reconciliation and the consequent dichotomy between world and spirit, makes it difficult to envisage any other means of maintaining a spiritual interest than that of adopting double standards. Ultimately, it is of course, inadequate sophistry. But, although the seeds of spiritual atrophy had long since been embodied in the division which post-Reformation theology created, this is not to deny the existence of genuine spiritual needs, particularly in the face of the onslaught of nineteenth century scientific materialism, albeit the adequate means of fulfilling those needs were lost. Maurice Lindsay is right therefore in describing such work as "pietism", as he is in the fact that it is a "let-out for genuine poetic resolution."

As the statement stands, however, it gives no indication of the fact that there were deep rooted reasons for this situation. To the divided Scottish consciousness, the material discoveries of the nineteenth century demanded total surrender to a material definition of human existence which that consciousness could not overcome. Scottish spirituality, isolated, and unable therefore to transcend the challenge, could only retreat from it into the realms of rural simplicity, in order to maintain at least the appearance of a harmony. Thus isolated, it could only be an appearance however, and the writing that invoked it was no substitute for a genuine, and therefore reconciliatory, expression of the poetic imagination. Indeed, this reaction, a retreat to the lowest common denominator in order to maintain the impression of harmony, continues to the present as an unhappy feature of Scottish life. But surely we must seek to understand this? The reason, I would submit, lies in the dichotomy which was established centuries before the Beagle sailed, the terms of which became clearly visible as a result of that voyage and allied nineteenth/

nineteenth century developments. Given that dichotomy, the mentality of the kailyard was the only alternative to an acceptance of all that these developments implied.

The crisis of faith which resulted from these developments was not of course restricted to Scotland. But the crisis was deepest where the religious tradition was least able to answer it, that is where the concept of spirituality was most absolute, and therefore wholly unable to cope with a changing definition of human existence. This being so, in Scotland, where the concept of any inter-relationship between the spirit and the world had long ago been expurgated, the crisis was to an exceptional degree, on what we might almost call a national basis, unanswerable. We could certainly find examples of the defensive sort of verse which we have seen to be a result outwith Scotland, springing it should be noted, from simiarly absolutist sources. But in other nations, this was but one of many reactions to the nineteenth century situation, and, in being the most defensive, the least important. In Scotland, because of the division which marked the consciousness of the nation, it was one of but two possible reactions, both absolute and mutually exclusive, and both therefore inadequate. In these circumstances, the retreat to the kailyard was the only alternative to the acceptance of absolute materialism, and as a result, a description of nineteenth century Scottish poetry is, on the one hand, a tour of the "Kailyard" and on the other an exposition of the kind of poetry, and the kind of consciousness, which an acceptance of the concept of total materialism produced.

It is indeed the case, that in John Davidson and James Thomson (BV), Scotland produced what were by far the starkest examples of such a commitment. No other poet of the age sought more desperately to provide a positive theory of existence from within a wholly material/

material framework than did Davidson. The tone of the following extract is one repeated time and again in both his poetry and his prose. To convey the extent of that commitment I must quote it at some length. It is taken from the Dedication which precedes "The Testament of John Davidson" and is addressed "To the Peers Temporal of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland":

> ... there is no Other World; there never was anything that man has meant by Other World; neither spirit, no mystical behind-the-veil; nothing not-ourselves that makes for righteousness, no metaphysical abstraction. Time is only matter, which is infinite, which is space, which is eternity; which we are. In the beginning matter had only one form, that of the oblivious, omnisolvent, imponderable ether. The principle constituents of matter, that is to say, of eternity, of the infinite, are carbon hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen; but these, with the other elements, consist of lightning, the first emergency of the ponderable from the imponderable. Lightning, with its poles or sexes, essence at once and seed and yeast, secreted in drops, or cells, or electrons the first limitation of matter, and began the fermentation in the eternal ether which was not to cease until the appearance of the visible Universe. No sooner had the drops, or cells, or electrons sprung from the tension of the dark, oblivious, omnipotent ether in eddying vortices than they sought an equilibrium, and combined themselves into groups, each group consisting of an array of negative and positive electrons, neutralizing each other, and revolving round a common centre like a miniature solar system; and this is the evolution of the atom. ... By an advanced process of chemical selection, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen were chosen out to be the basis of life, and life through geological periods of natural selection arrived at men and women, in whom are enshrined the two poles or sexes of the lightning, the earliest nisus of matter towards self-consciousness: matter now capable in us of the highest ecstasy and of all knowledge. Thus I break the world out of the imaginary chrysalis or cocoon of Other World in which it has slumbered so long; and man beholds himself, not now as that fabulous monster, half-god, half-devil, of the Christian era, but as Man, the very form/

> form and substance of the universe, the material of eternity, eternity itself, become conscious and self-conscious. This is the greatest thing told since the world began. It means and end of the strangling past; and end of our conceptions of humanity and divinity, of our ideas of good and evil, of our religion, our literature, our art, our polity, it means that which all men have desired in all ages, it means a new beginning; it means that the material forces of mind and imagination can now re-establish the world as if nothing had ever been thought or imagined before; it means that there is nothing greater than man anywhere; it means infinite terror, infinite greatness.[29]

Subsequent history has taught us the negative aspects of such a theory, "infinite terror" indeed. But in fact, Davidson's own confidence in what he proposes is less than convincing. There is a stridency, a desperation in the true sense in his tone, and indeed throughout his writing, the reverse side of his assertions of the dawn of the Superman is an undercurrent of despair. Even the "Testament" of which the preceding extract forms the climax of the Dedication, is concluded by an epitaph which is indicative of Davidson's last thoughts upon his heroic but unconvincing stance:

> Farewell the hope that mocked, farewell despair
> That went before me still and made the pace.[30]

First and foremost, Davidson could not persuade himself. The truth is that such a theory requires in effect a "leap of faith" less convincing and more difficult to maintain than any transcendent conception of human existence. By this I mean that such conceptions are, in terms of their effect upon ordinary human existence, essentially reconciliatory, and therefore recognizably life enhancing. The practical workings of absolute materialism provides no such corroboration of any ultimately positive consummation. A total acceptance of such a materialism which fails to maintain faith in/

in such a positive, is left to face the prospect of an existence which is essentially meaningless. The results of this we see in the despair which alternates with Davidson's positive assertions, and also, ultimately, whatever the immediate practical causes, in his suicide in the sea off Penzance in 1909.

The same prospect of an existence without meaning, haunted the life and work of James Thomson (BV), and unlike Davidson, he succumbed to the despair which it provoked with little struggle. The mood pervades his entire work, but is most completely expressed in "The City of Dreadful Night".

> I find no hint throughout the Universe
> Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;
> I find alone Necessity Supreme;
> With infinite Mystery, abysmal, dark,
> Unlighted ever by the faintest spark
> For us the flitting shadows of a dream.[31]

In the absence of the possibility of any transcendent solution, Thomson, in recognizing the nature of the materialism within which he is confined, remains:

> ... one desolate, Fate smitten,
> Whose faith and hope are dead, and who would die.[32]

The extremes which are displayed on the one hand by Thomson and Davidson, and on the other by the literature of the 'Kailyard', are the nineteenth century expression of the twin poles of the divided consciousness which marked the Scottish psyche in the post-Reformation era. Of the former, Maurice Lindsay has written that:

> In their revelations of, or revelling in, despair, Thomson and Davidson look forward to the twentieth century. With the exception of Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) - and, even then, primarily in his role as novelist - the others all looked back.[33]

This may be true on a level, but fundamentally, it is untrue. To say so, is to disregard the fact, and it is the essential fact, that "The Waste Land", which in common critical parlance has come to/

to symbolize the despair of the Modern, is also the place of the Holy Grail, of the possibility of a higher reconciliation, which the poetic imagination in the twentieth century as in every previous age, seeks to attain. There is nothing at all of this in the "City of Dreadful Night", of the Scot imprisoned totally within the material. Such a reconciliation of world and spirit is precisely what, for four hundred years, had been displaced by an insuperable void. The dichotomy between world and spirit which that void created, and the consequent absence of the possibility of a higher reconciliation, brings us by the nineteenth century to the opposite, and equally sterile extremes of the "Kailyard" and the "City".

Such was the seemingly hopeless condition of Scottish life and letters when, with much of the rest of humanity, the country entered the Great War. The changes which that hitherto inconceivable destruction wrought upon humanity in general, and Scotland in particular was, of course, profound. In concluding the present study, I must therefore say something of the conditions which have emerged in the twentieth century, and also consider in what way those conditions relate to what has gone before.

Before doing so, however, I must devote a little space to a short description of the major features of European literature. So far, I have considered the nature of Scottish literature, through several centuries, in terms of those factors which seem to have particularly dominated and directed that literature, and the consciousness which produced it. I will now seek briefly to indicate the extent to which those factors compare with, and to what extent differ from the life and letters of Europe in general throughout the same period.

PART THREE

Chapter VIII:
European Comparisons

Before concluding this study of Scotland's cultural history, I must seek to verify the uniqueness of that history as I have described it, by indicating the extent to which it differed from the general European experience in those centuries which have been discussed. Of necessity, the comparison must be brief. An exhaustive investigation into the complexities of European thought since the Reformation period, quite apart from exceeding my capabilities, would in any case be alien both to the structure and to the primary purpose of the present thesis. I shall therefore adhere strictly to the specific purpose of this section in relation to the study as a whole, by considering some of the major aspects of European cultural history in so far as they are illustrative of what I have suggested to be the distinctive features of the Scottish experience during the same period.

Earlier, I sought to illustrate the reconciliatory principle which lay at the heart of the life of pre-Reformation Christendom, by indicating its centrality to the literature of pre-Reformation Scotland. Thereafter, I described what I consider to be the essential factor necessary to an understanding of the Scottish character and culture since that time, namely the unique extent to which any such possibility of harmony was lost sight of as a result of the peculiar severity of the Scottish experience in the post-Reformation era. Obviously, however, the general currents which combined with exceptional intensity to terminate the vision upon which the life and literature of pre-Reformation Scotland was based, did not occur in isolation. Throughout Europe that vision was undermined, and broadly similar forces to those at work in Scotland effected the erosion.

Not only Protestantism, but also the Catholic Church of the Counter-Reformation had the effect, in their various ways, of distancing the spirit from the everyday world in a manner destructive of the medieval framework. Conversely, and increasingly with the passage of time, scientific advancement encouraged an expanding interest in the affairs of the material world itself, and the emergence of philosophies which reflected this emphasis, thereby distancing the world from the spiritual universe. Thus,the tendency towards a dichotomy between world and spirit was, it could be said, promoted by the direction of thought in both of these respective spheres. Clearly then, the forces at work throughout Europe were closely related to those which fundamentally altered the nature of Scottish culture and civilization.

Having said this, however, the point remains that in spite of such parallels and essential distinction separates the fate of post-Reformation Scotland from that of the rest of Europe. It lies in the fact that in general, European life and letters survived the traumas attendant upon the break-up of the medieval world in the company of traditions which remained sufficiently vital to maintain the possibility of re-discovery and re-definition. The combination of forces which came to bear upon the Scottish psyche were of an intensity which permanently precluded any such possibility. G R Elton has encapsulated the narrowing process which the Reformation period brought to bear upon the creative artist by reference to the work of Michelangelo (1475-1564):

> ... a great deal of Michelangelo's long life and enormous production records quite simply the pilgrimage of one troubled and straining soul. Yet there is something more generally significant about the direction of his pilgrimage. Michelangelo's work was always entirely his own, but at the same time it stood linked with the work of his time. His David, the sculpture which/

> which first made him famous, is a pure expression of humanity, not a story told in stone; it is also therefore an end-product beyond which the classical humanism of the Renaissance could not be developed. The work of his manhood - the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, charged with a strictly human beauty and symbolism yet also deeply religious, or the Moses of Julius II's tomb, a markedly human prophet - is Promethean: thoroughly aware of the gods, but also vigorously struggling with them, proclaiming the greatness of man even in the face of the greatness of God. When one looks from these to such works of his latter years as the Deposition in Florence Cathedral, or particularly his last achievement, the Milan Pietà which has entirely abandoned the human scale of classical and Renaissance art, one moves into a different world where the spirit of religion has taken charge. The God of the Sistine Chapel is the pre-Reformation God: man's answer to the problems of the universe. That of the Pietà is the incomprehensible God of Luther and Loyola: no doubt concerned with man but in his own way which faith alone, not reason, can comprehend.[1]

The shift in perspective described here is real and important. It does not however signify the fundamental disjunction with which the Scottish situation presents us. The European vision of the inter-relationship between spirit and world had undergone a change of focus, the former becoming more distant from and less comprehensible to the latter. It would in times to come be faced with other such changes, most notably in relation to the rise of science and rationalism. But a change of focus is a matter of degree, and is distinguished in this by the fact that the imaginative arts continued to reflect the changing perspective within the context of a whole vision maintained in a persisting cultural tradition. The scale of the Milan Pietà may well convey something of the incomprehensibility of the post-Reformation God when compared to the earlier artistic response, but its subject, a proper companion piece to the Annunciation,[2] is the quintessential assertion of the contrary. By contrast, "in the midst of the/

the Reformation, a movement historically inevitable, no doubt, however far the social and artistic consequences went towards destroying Scottish culture and civilization"[3] the Scottish vision of the inter-relationship of world and spirit was destroyed, and if the change of focus undergone by European man is illustrated by the changes in the work of Michelangelo, that destruction, and its effect, is symbolized, after 1568, "by the silence, for whatever cause, of Alexander Scott".[4]

As I have said,[5] together with the social satire of Sir David Lyndsay, the love poetry of Alexander Scott's generation - allowing for such notable seventeenth century exceptions as Drummond of Hawthornden - provides the last occasion in Scottish literary history on which we can say that the Scottish poetic tradition relates directly to the general tendencies of European culture. Indeed, these last expressions already contained many of the attitudes which were central to, as well as being the approximate extent of, the disintegration of the vision of medieval Europe. As the calm of the medieval universe became increasingly disturbed, so the artist was more urgently faced with the decision of whether like Lyndsay to become involved and take part in the affairs responsible for the disturbance, or to seek refuge in those areas in which the vision could continue unchallenged, as did the love poets of the Scottish court.

Throughout Renaissance Europe the love poem provided such a refuge, its universality reinforced by the neo-Platonic concept which recognizes in human love the shadow of divine love and thereby relates the two. Growing out of fourteenth century Italy, in the middle and late sixteenth century its masters were the Frenchmen of the Pléiade, pre-eminently Pierre de Ronsard (1524-85) and Joachim du Bellay (1525-60), with Wyatt and Sydney providing English examples.

Central to the embattled Drummond in the seventeenth century,[6] this neo-Platonic element is at once wholly compatible with that medieval vision of human love examined in The Kingis Quair.[7] The following poem of du Bellay will serve as example:

Si notre vie est moins qu'une journée
En l'eternel, si l'an qui fait le tour
Chasse nos jours sans espoir de retour,
Si périssable est toute chose née,

Qui song-tu mon âme emprisonnée?
Pourquoi te plait l'obscur de notre jour,
Si pour voler en un plus clair séjour,
Tu as au dos l'aile bien empennée?

Là est le bien que tout esprit désire,
Là repos où tout le monde aspire,
Là est l'amour, là plaisir encore.

Là ô mon âme, au plus haut ciel guidée,
Tu y pourras reconnaitre l'Idée
De la beauté qu'en ce monde j'adore.[8]

However, the evidence of the poetry en masse suggests that the religious implications of the theory are now less deeply felt, and indeed, as often as not it seems to simply justify the celebration of human love - and poetical skill - for their own sake. In any case, as Europe moved towards the seventeenth century and political and religious attitudes hardened, poetry came increasingly to be confined within safe area. Perhaps an exception, and one which is indicative of the wisdom of adhering to the rule, is the metamorphosis of Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata into the inferior Gerusalemme Conquistata, a transformation promoted by fear of the Inquisition, and indicative of the pressures which the new and factional age brought to bear upon the imagination.[9] However, the love poets of the period have their own value and unlike their Scottish counterparts, they have their part in a continuing tradition. The new scope which the Pléiade bequeathed to the French language was a vital factor in the development of the age of Corneille, La Fontaine, Racine and Molière, which despite/

despite totalitarian pressures forms one of the great eras of European literature. Likewise, Wyatt and Sydney have their place in the creation of a linguistic climate conducive to the emergence of Shakespearian drama.

Scottish love poetry of the period existed within the confines of the Scottish court and was largely extinguished, with that court, in 1603. Simultaneously, the entire social structure which Lyndsay's Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis evokes was dismantled. As I have indicated, Lyndsay is a Scottish representative of the other major literary direction stimulated by the changes which marked Renaissance and Reformation Europe, namely the abandonment of the medieval vision for a part in the affairs of the newly emerging world. In the widest sense, the humanistic urge is of course a central aspect of Renaissance writing. The political expression of this increased concern for the here and now is seen in the rise of the nation state, and essentially in its assertion of spiritual authority. Where Henryson judged the world by appeal to the spiritual, Lyndsay looks to the temporal ruler to safeguard values, including spiritual values.[10] In this his work empitomizes a major feature of the literature of his age. If this reversal is indicative of the diminution of the medieval vision, where the elevation of the temporal power which it suggests became a lasting reality, it also marks the extent of the decline. As we know, the greater extremes which distinguish the Scottish experience in the post-Reformation era are closely connected with the fact that the period witnessed no such elevation of nationhood, but rather its disintegration.

It was chiefly as dramatist that Lyndsay examined the affairs of the day, and likewise in Europe the parallel response took place pre-eminently in the hitherto restricted forms of drama and of prose.

The literature which most fully reflects the traumas which the love poets escaped, is the drama of England and Spain, the prose of Rabelais and Montaigne, as well as that of Cervantes, whose "knight of the dolorous visage" so much personifies the profits and the losses of the age. It is perhaps to an extent the case that the emergence of these forms is a response to the need for a literature which reflects the multiplicity and the contradictions of material existence, where poetry had traditionally striven to achieve a universal harmony. In any case, in sixteenth century Europe we must look to drama and to prose if we wish to guage the compromise between past and present in literature and in life.

One should not become over solemn when speaking of Don Quixote, although the ambiguous response which the book unfailingly promotes in the reader is a most succinct expression of the post-medieval dilemma. Clearly, the primary target of Cervantes' humour was the contemporary popularity of chivalric romance at a time when the values which such poetry expressed had ceased to bear any relation to the attitudes governing the actual world. Nevertheless, it is the experience of every reader not merely to sympathize with Don Quixote, but to recognize the superiority, in effect the greater humanity of his illusory world and its values, over the chaotic reality of existence towards the beginning of the seventeenth century. The realities of that world counter Don Quixote throughout, and are a rejection of any soft-centred and irrelevant nostalgia. But, as an imaginative writer, Cervantes cannot but reflect some of the dismay attendant upon witnessing the diminution of the harmonious universe of the medieval imagination and of the medieval world. However, as I have said, crisis and re-definition is the essence of the period. If the content of the literature reflects the crisis, its existence expresses the continuing effort to re-define/

re-define within a tradition the imagination and the world. Only where the crisis was of such proportions as to kill the tradition did the possibility of re-definition cease and silence ensue. In the preceding study of Scottish literary history we have examined the occasion on which such a situation came closest to becoming reality. But indicative of the exceptional severity of the Scottish example is the extent to which, elsewhere in Europe, the attempt to re-define within a tradition continued.

The awareness of a narrowing of vision, the loss of harmony and the threat of chaos, being a central feature of the period, is to be witnessed in many of Shakespeare's plays. In the context of the present study the consideration of this presence naturally brings to mind Edwin Muir's famous essay "The Politics of King Lear":

> To understand the Tragedies and the Histories one has to keep in mind the historical background of Shakespeare's age ... The Dissolution of the Monasteries, which rang the warning that the old medieval order was nearing its end, was completed in 1539, twenty-five years before Shakespeare's birth. King Lear was written about 1605-6, six or seven years after the birth of Cromwell and forty-three years before the execution of Charles I. In the interval between the first and last of these dates the medieval world with its communal tradition was dying, and the modern individualist world was bringing itself to birth. Shakespeare lived in that violent period of transition. The old world still echoed in his ears; he was aware of the new as we are aware of the future, that is as an inchoate, semi-prophetic dream.[11]

King Lear brings these two worlds into direct confrontation. The opposition which Lear faces is not a revolt, not a conscious defiance of a recognized order of good and evil such as is represented by Macbeth or by Hamlet's uncle. It is rather the emergence of something which, in being absolutely new, recognizes nothing. What we witness/

witness in Goneril, Regan and their accomplices is essentially:

> ... a hiatus of memory, a breach in continuity; they seem to come from nowhere and to be on their way to nowhere; they have words and acts only to meet the momentary emergency, the momentary appetite.

That the times in which he lived did prompt Shakespeare to speculate upon such matters is evident in many of his plays. In some ways for example, Coriolanus provides a more stark instance than King Lear. There, the old order which Lear personifies, which Edgar maintains, and which in the end re-emerges from the carnage is not even represented. As a result, the atmosphere that pervades the play has a unique sterility. If the outward expression of this is that the relationships within society have broken down, the unspoken source of the conflict and of the sterility is, I would suggest, the total absence from the world of Coriolanus of any consciousness of anything whatsoever beyond the terms of that entirely material world. If the spectre of chaos in society haunts Shakespeare and his contemporaries, they are also aware that at the heart of the disruption is a diminution in the status of the spiritual universe, and a resultant increase in the extent to which the material world is left to its own devices and to its own dissentions.

As we have seen, the central threat to the traditional "chain of being" was the elevation of the temporal power. As Muir says in the same essay:

> Macchiavellianism was a current preoccupation in Shakespeare's time, and (if we) consider further that the Renaissance gave to the individual a prominence he had not known since classical times, and that personal power, especially in princes, appeared sometimes to be boundless, we need not shrink from regarding Edmund and his confederates as political types.[12]

However Shakespeare's fears are not prophetic but "semi-prophetic".

If the elevation of the prince raised fears of a decline into individuality, it simultaneously placed a limit upon that decline. So it is that the source of Shakespeare's misgivings about the future is also the foundation of his hopes. If the initial usurpation diminishing the medieval universe was that of the crown in assuming spiritual autonomy, in doing so the crown itself emerges as a bulwark against further disintegration. This being so, the monarchy stands at the centre of Shakespeare's world. Peace and harmony are synonymous with the acceptance of its authority, while to defy that authority is to invoke chaos, even though the initial defiance and precedent was perpetrated by the monarchy itself. Throughout Europe, as the ideological stances of the various reformation movements hardened, it was to the very pragmatism of the political state that those who sought the maintenance of a continuity through moderation turned. Increasingly, however, the totalitarian demands of the state itself were to threaten the imagination.

The growth of institutional authority and with it the stifling of the enthusiastic pursuit of the free-ranging thought which had been the fuel of the Renaissance defines the dominant mood of seventeenth century Europe. Italy, the source of that Renaissance, as well as Spain, which in the days of Cervantes, Lope de Vega and their contemporaries had proved one of the creative glories of the era, entered into a period in which conformity to the demands of the Counter-Reformation was the highest priority. In France, the absolute zenith of monarchy was accomplished, while similar attempts in England provoked crisis. The negative effects of the fragmentation of the medieval universe both in politics and in religion became more obvious, and they are reflected in the literature of the day.

If the emergent nation state defined the limit of the diminution of the medieval universe it also marked its extent. Essentially, a universal vision declined into a series of fragmented, and therefore factional definitions, and such definitions demand conformity. The sterile latinity which overtook the poetry of Italy and Spain, the neo-classicism of Jonson and his followers in England and the heroic theatre of Corneille in France, all of them respond to this demand. When they are not following the safe, though not inglorious pursuit of stylistic perfection, they are, as in Corneille's Roman plays, actually underwriting the new order. Versailles is justified by reference to the Rome of Caesar Augustus, and from Corneille to Pope this function of Augustanism represents, for all its achievements, a fundamental diminution of the poet's role which directly parallels the displacement of a universal vision by a factional definition of existence demanding conformity.

However, literature continued to be written. It did so, moreover, not only in the compliant tone I have described, but also subversively. While Jonson and Herrick pleased, privately, the poets who would come to be known as Metaphysical concerned themselves with the difficulties of life. In the face of the materialism of Restoration England, Milton re-asserted the primary importance of the spiritual context. Behind the mask of neo-classical tragedy, Racine did something similar before the court of the Sun King. It must be noted here that both Milton and Racine are distinguished by their proximity to that end of the religious spectrum which brings them unusually close to what was the dominant mood in Scotland. The fact that in spite of this, both of them produced literature of the highest calibre is largely due to the mitigating factors which distinguished their situation from that with which Scotland was faced.

Milton may have opposed the monarchy but he did not oppose the state. He was born in, and he lived in what was discernably a continuing tradition, and one which remained far ranging in the field of human knowledge. It must be remembered that as well as being a Puritan, Milton was a humanist scholar of the highest stature. Nevertheless, his poetry does contain many of those facets of individualistic Protestantism which were seen to mark the Scottish psyche in the post-Reformation era.

The tendency away from Christ and towards Jehovah which the dismissal of intermediaries and the assertion of the individual promoted, was one which affected both the English Puritan party of which Milton was an adherent, and the Jansenists at Port-Royal, who so much influenced Racine. I have indicated elsewhere that an honest commitment to such a religious climate demands great resolve. Out of the combination of a profound understanding of Renaissance scholarship, and the spiritual resolve which the absolute terms of the radical reformers necessitated, Paradise Lost was written. Milton re-asserted the presence of an awesome deity and all which that implied at a time when the anticipated rule of the saints had been displaced with extra-ordinary rapidity by what seemed in comparison an orgy of worldliness, justified, in the popular imagination at least, by the increasingly material concerns of both science and philosophy. In the face of this, Milton's is the greatest expression of radical Protestant defiance. But he also exhibits something of that vulnerability which I have suggested to be inherent in the loss of the reconciliatory principle and the consequent dichotomy between the spirit and the material world, particularly as man's definition of that world began to alter. It is only by putting on the resolve which this theological situation demands that Milton's Adam and Eve/

Eve eschew suicide, and frail man takes up an existence under the eyes of an omnipotent and unapproachable God.[13] While the early reformers were sustained by their faith in Christ, as no doubt was Milton himself, in practice, by removing from their Christianity that which was specifically Christian, which is to say mediatory, there was an inevitable re-appearance of that sense of incommensurability, the correction of which had been the essential purpose of Christ's mission.[14]

As a result of the influence of Port-Royal, this presence is even more apparent in the plays of Racine. As in the field of philosophy Pascal mocked the small-mindedness of the age's worldlings by illustrating the many aspects of existence, and of human psychology which implied an infinity that their narrow pre-occupations took no account of,[15] so did the theatre of Racine re-instate that infinity at a time when much French literature was content to reflect the "Grand Siècle" at its own estimation. But as with the Puritanism which informs Milton, the infinity of Port-Royal is awesome and unpetitionable. Notwithstanding any positive which might be drawn from the Jansenist espousal of predestination, the world of Andromaque and Iphigenie and Phèdre is a return to classical themes not only in the obvious sense, and as another expression of the period's devotion to neo-classicism, but in that the vision of life which Racine's education bequeathed to him suggests a situation in which human hopes of salvation are bleak in a manner reminiscent of that which we considered in relation to Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice.[16] That is to say, in the precise use of the terms Christian, pre-Christian.

Where Milton had the resolve to carve a triumph out of such a religious vision, Racine, having broken with Port-Royal, expressed the same situation in terms of tragedy. However, during his twelve/

twelve years of silence between Phèdre and his last play, Athalie, he is said to have made his peace with his Jansenist teachers. This being so it is significant that in this last play the context is no longer classical but Old Testament, and that its triumphant hero is Jehovah Himself. It may therefore be considered that in Athalie Racine attains a positive spiritual stance comparable with that of Milton. This may be so, but the God of Athalie remains the same relentless deity which ruled the world of Phèdre. Where before Racine had mourned the fate of fallen humanity in this situation, he now, presumably, renounces Venus and lives in hope of election.[17]

However, his final position is not that simple. The play would further seem to convey a consciousness of the dichotomy which such a theology implies both individually and collectively. If the play Athalie is an acknowledgement of "Le cruel Dieu des Juifs", it also witnesses a defiance in Athalie, the pagan queen, who like her parents Ahab and Jezabel will be destroyed by that deity, which is not to be found in the earlier plays.[18] There is in fact a logic in this. The plays of Racine's main dramatic period, though they exist within a Jansenist universe, are not Jansenist. This being so, they pay testimony to the tragedy of the human lot. When, by contrast, the Jansenist position is accepted, as in Athalie it seems to be, then a division must be accepted which implies two sides. Moreover, as reconciliation is at the same time excluded, the situation suggests no course other than defiance for the rejected faction.[19] In examining the nature of post-Reformation Scotland we have already dealt with the occasion on which the absolutes of Athalie came closest to reality. In that context the defiance of the pagan queen could be related to the abandonment of Calvinist tradition for a commitment to the affairs of the world and to the value of the honest man.

By contrast, and notwithstanding Milton or Racine, neither in England, nor in France, nor anywhere else in Europe did any such conception fundamentally influence cultural development. Certainly by the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a decline in religious fervour and a new centrality given to the affairs of the material world. This was not however a reaction against spiritual absolutism but a matter of emphasis, and emphasis moreover based less on the actual implications of the scientific and philosophical propositions of the age, than on a popular and somewhat unthinking response to those propositions. The scientists themselves were not atheists, and while their efforts continued to expand human understanding of the workings of the material world, its relationship to a wider and spiritual universe remained viable. Correspondingly, while Cartesian philosophy provided the popular basis of the Age of Reason, it must be remembered that Descartes himself was primarily concerned with just such a relationship, and that the existence of God, and therefore of an extra-material context, is the very foundation of his thought.[20] We must distinguish between the popular tenor of the age and the actual scholarship by which those attitudes were supposedly justified. In this respect, the opposition between Cartesian rationalism and Pascal's re-assertion of the imperfectability of man and of the consequent necessity of Redemption exist in the same universe, and are infinitely closer to each other than are either to the naïve rationalism of which the practical expression was an unqualified subservience to materialism.

Throughout this study, I have spoken of the highest function of the poetic imagination being the achievement of a reconciliation between material reality and spiritual aspiration. I have already indicated the dilution of this poetic function attendant upon the eclipse of/

of spiritual authority by the temporal power, which is illustrated by the very term Augustanism. The simultaneous subjection of the poetic imagination to the materialism which scientific discovery popularly suggested is a further aspect of this diminution. In accepting such dicates as that contained in Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) that "Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct", the English poets of the age of Pope, for all their efforts to uphold standards and develop style, were accepting a reduction in the poet's role. In an age which hailed the achievements of the natural scientist and the philosopher of reason, leadership belonged to, and values were determined by the natural scientist and the philosopher of reason. When Pope declares that:

> The proper study of mankind is man.
> (Essay on Man Epistle II)

he is subjecting himself to these values. This is not to dismiss the period, and it is certainly not to dismiss Pope. However, in the context of the universality of the poetic imagination that has been postulated in the present study, the period does mark the failure of that imagination to embrace human discovery. On the contrary, by submitting to the terms of such discovery the poetic imagination was effectively deprived of that universality, and consequently, of its central, reconciliatory function. However, as I have indicated, the reasons for this were not profound or unalterable, and neither therefore were the effects permanent.

Again, in the present context there is an essential superficiality surrounding French pre-occupations in the age of Voltaire. There was as I have said a vast qualitative difference separating Cartesian rationalism as it was conceived by its founder, from that/

that which was popularly adopted in the eighteenth century. Likewise, the later reaction, though perhaps deeply felt was not deeply perceived, having as little in common with Pascal's objections as the earlier optimism had to do with Descartes. By submitting itself to the discipline of the scientifically ascertainable literature was depriving itself of its own essential purpose, which is the encapsulation of precisely that which is not scientifically ascertainable. The inadequacy of reason alone in gauging the human condition in its entirety came increasingly to be recognized as the century progressed. However, having once submitted itself to a material definition, the initial reaction of the age was not a true re-assertion of the imagination, transcending and embracing knowledge. Rather, it was in itself a material reaction in the sense in which that term has been used throughout this study, elevating natural feeling in opposition to reason. Indeed, the seeds of this reaction were themselves contained in the superficial rationalism of the age of Voltaire, in that the reason which was advocated was a promotion to centrality of the values and opinions of the ordinary man. While there is much to be recommended in the tolerance and benevolence that accompanied this attitude, it was a mood which was clearly liable to sentimentality and to a dedication to feeling which has ultimately little to do with rationality at all.

Thus we may say that such "rationalism" itself paved the way for the reaction of the senses of which Jean-Jacques Rousseau was high priest. We may further say that this confrontation between the rational and the sensual, to which Diderot gave expression in Rameau's Nephew[21] and which some would consider a fundamental confrontation, was no such thing, in that both responses, in contrast to the level upon which the opposition between Descartes and/

and Pascal occurred, are material responses. For all the vast political and social implications of the attitudes which Rousseau and Diderot released, those implication remained in themselves material. The response that would truly re-establish imaginative literature in its universal function had still to come, and given that such universality had been traditionally the domain of the poetic imagination, its resurrection would take the form of a poetic renewal:

> Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau;
> Mock on, Mock on, 'tis all in vain.
> You throw the sand against the wind,
> And the wind blows it back again.
>
> And every sand becomes a Gem
> Reflected in the beams divine;
> Blown back, they blind the mocking Eye,
> But still in Israel's paths they shine.
>
> The Atoms of Democritus
> And Newton's particles of light
> Are sands upon the Red sea shore,
> Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.[22]

If the European literature so far discussed has served to illustrate, if only by its very existence, a distinction between the cultural effects of the post-Reformation era in Scotland and elsewhere, the outstanding expression of this distinction is perhaps the Romantic Movement which swept Europe and was in essence a re-assertion or re-definition of the traditional creative function, but which as we have seen failed to penetrate the Scottish consciousness in this its most profound aspect. Beyond the political hopes which the French Revolution generated, beyond the elevation of sexual love, beyond the histrionics, the permanent value of the Romantic Revival lies in the re-discovery of an extra-material dimension, and of the ability of the poetic imagination to perceive this dimension, thereby maintaining it in a relationship with material existence. The foregoing poem by William Blake foreshadows this perception. The poem further/

further serves to illustrate that such an attitude is not only a fundamental qualification of the enlightened era of which Voltaire was the figurehead, but also of the more obvious aspects of the Romantic temperament such as I have mentioned and which we associate with the name of Rousseau. In considering Romanticism, we must bear this latter qualification in mind. We must do so, for example, when we turn to Germany, in which the new spirit first found expression on such a scale as to indicate that a major movement was afoot.

While acknowledging that in Germany for the most part the recurring influence of the hysterical spirit of Sturm und Drang maintained an outflow of the worst aspects of Romanticism, at once extreme and trivial, there remains that which is of permanent and universal value. Transcending Sturm und Drang and even, since it had come to collect such associations, the term Romanticism itself, such value is to be found pre-eminently in the work of Goethe. The distinction is indeed contained in the difference between Goethe's intentions in his early novel Werther, and the general response to that work, which established his European reputation on a quite false interpretation.[23] The novel is in fact a denial of the adequacy of sensual love as a means to salvation, the ultimate expression of which is the hero's suicide. The fact that it was widly received as a glorification of such love, and of the tragic pose of the disappointed lover, is testimony enough to the shallower aspects of the Romantic mood. Goethe himself advocated nō such self-indulgence, although neither does he desert the human level for the ethereal realms of, for example, Hölderlin.[24] Rather, in the many different fields of his endeavour, he sought to reconcile the entirety of human experience.

I have said that not only the rationalism of the eighteenth century, but also the more readily perceptible deities - political, sexual - of the Romantic reaction, were in the widest sense of the term materialistic. The increasingly obvious shortcomings of the former position themselves incurred the reaction that followed. However, even more so than in the Age of Reason, during which the contradictions could be overcome by the general mood of moderation, by long term hopes and the acceptance of short term limitation, the material deities of the Romantic Movement were asserted in the hope of imminent redemption. But given the material basis of such hopes disappointment remained intrinsic and inevitable, so that their converse was a widespread cult of self-pity, and on occasion, despair and death.

Setting aside the responses, this crisis, springing from the failure of a materialistic means of redemption, is a recurrent feature of life and of literature in the modern age. One thinks, for example, of the quandary of the Marxist, particularly on those occasions on which he has ostensibly come into his Kingdom. In such cases, especially, indeed exclusively when the best intentions and the most genuine hopes are involved, and even where within the limits of materialism's imperfectability miracles have been achieved, an impasse is created by the contrast between the redemptive claims of the materialistic religion and the actuality of its limitations. Such a crisis is inevitable when that which exists upon the temporal plane is accredited with the attributes of the absolute and permanent.

By its inherent nature, however, the creative imagination transcends the false deities time and again. As we have seen, Goethe rejected the gods of shallow Romanticism in his Werther, and continued instead to seek the context in which humanity might truly/

truly achieve reconciliation and harmony. In doing so, Goethe, in the company of the other great spirits of the period, helped to resurrect the essential function of the poetic imagination. Goethe's creative career was of course long and exceptionally varied. His ultimate vision can perhaps best be summed up in his Faust, a project which, continuing throughout his creative life, developed with that vision.

In his choice of subject, Goethe went straight to the heart of the contemporary dilemma. The Faust legend succinctly symbolizes the ambitions of the modern man, seeking his consummation within the realm of his own being. His experiences reveal the inadequacy of such efforts in themselves. The consummation which is sought can be achieved neither through the classical nor the romantic deities, neither reason nor the senses are sufficient. But in recognizing this, in maintaining something akin to what Keats called "negative capability",[25] that is a refusal to kneel before false gods and a dogged continuation of the search, Faust gains the right of entrance into a context in which his aspirations can indeed find fulfilment. That context is established by the "Prologue in Heaven" as is humanity's right of admittance:

> The good man, through obscurest aspiration,
> Has still an instinct of the one true way.[26]

In the fallen world, that instinct is energized by the perception of the altruism which human love can contain. For Faust it finds expression in the person of Margaret, and his response to her takes on something of that element of selflessness through which fallen man is reconciled with the eternal in reflecting the essential nature of the divine. Through this, the context of the "Prologue in Heaven" can be re-established in the closing scene of the play, and Goethe thus indicates the framework within which human fulfilment can be accomplished/

accomplished. In doing so, he also gives expression to the universe which is the province of the poetic imagination:

> The noble Spirit now is free,
> And saved from evil scheming:
> Whoe'er aspires unweariedly
> Is not beyond redeeming.
> And if he feels the grace of Love
> That from on High is given,
> The Blessed Hosts that wait above,
> Shall welcome him to Heaven.[27]

The other great centre of the Romantic Revolution was England, and there too we find many expressions of what I have indicated to be the permanent core of the movement. I have already illustrated this by reference to William Wordsworth. However, a consciousness of such matters is more widespread among the English Romantics and is indeed the source of their lasting value. I may not at this time discuss the matter at length, but in spite of its general fame I include the following extract from Coleridge in that it deals succinctly with the values with which we are concerned, as well as being indicative of factors prompting the emergence of later forms such as the Symbolist poetry which I will speak of a little later:

> The imagination then I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially <u>vital</u> even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.
>
> Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended/

> blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will which we express as the word choice. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.[28]

While that which Coleridge calls fancy is an aspect of every literature in every age, it remains, as a result of the "law of association", intrinsically a part of the age which produces it. The higher functions of the imagination exist above and beyond this. Primarily it perceives, and in perceiving establishes, human existence in an eternal context. Secondarily, through the creative function, such perception "co-existing with the conscious will" is made to relate to the material world, providing the framework in which the human condition can be harmonized. Functioning thus, the imagination is therefore universal and permanent, and in the above extract Coleridge re-defines a theory which reflects the perennial practice of the poetic imagination at its most profound.

As I have said there is a general consciousness of such matters at the heart of the work of the greatest of the English Romantics.[29] Even Shelley, who did not achieve a positive faith in this wider context, recognized the necessity, as a pre-requisite to existence, of such a hope, and he found justification for that hope in the imagination ascending "to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar."[30] Here it must of course be acknowledged that such Promethean thoughts contain the danger of the subtlest heresy of all whereby poetry itself, and therefore the poet, becomes the divinity. It shares its source with those other false deities of Romanticism that I have mentioned, that is in the recognition of the inadequacy of what is, and the need for an alternative through which the contradictions will be reconciled. Like them also, it fails in being based upon the temporal and imperfect, in this case the throne of the poet's ego.

This is the aspect of Romanticism which the twentieth century has found most dubious, and which was memorably examined by T S Eliot.[31] Indeed it is a continuous and, it must be said, understandable illusion which recurrently distracts the post-Enlightenment imagination. It is present in Hölderlin and in Shelley, in the French Symbolists, in the transformations of Rilke and the Vision of Yeats, and it stems from the fact that while the autonomy of material existence is seen to be folly, the residue of individualism which those claims instilled tend to deceive the poet as to the nature and source of his imagination. Having said this, however, a great deal of such poetry is successful, in that by penetrating the materialist definition it comes much closer to the universal and the permanent than the definition it rejects. In the extent to which it is deceived it is largely self-correcting, in that the extremes of self-deification are instantly recognizable, being the factor which takes some Romantic and post-Romantic poetry painfully close to the ridiculous. Clearly, for the most part this is not the case. Since the Romantic period the poetic imagination has been continuously re-asserted, its permanence gauged by the extent to which the statements which its secondary nature produces are conscious of their primary source.

While it was in Germany and in England that these deeper and more lasting features of Romanticism found fullest expression, the Romantic mood left no European country unaffected, though often in both senses of the word. France, which during the great productive period of Goethe, Wordsworth and Coleridge had been taken up with the events of the Revolution and with Napoleon's grand adventure, found the Romantic voice somewhat later in such poets as Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo and Musset. While they inherited a sensibility that included all the flaws which have been indicated, yet very considerablepoetry was/

was produced. There is, for example, a nobility in Vigny's pessimism, as there is elsewhere in that of the Italian Leopardi. There is also, recurrently in the work of Victor Hugo, a sense of that wider context which I have said to be the framework of the best Romantic poetry. However well it is expressed though, the impression remains that this aspect of Romanticism is likewise inherited more than it is deeply perceived, and that the great original perception belongs to those poets already referred to. In any case, while acknowledging the achievements of the French Romantics, and likewise the great labours of Pushkin in Russia, I must quickly pass on to the creative testaments which emerged from both of these nations in the literary generation which followed.

I have said that the essential content of the Romantic Revival lies in the re-assertion of a vision of humanity above and beyond that which can be contained in any materialist definition. Simultaneously, however, the nineteenth century witnessed an acceleration of the drive towards such a definition, which by the latter half of that century, had resulted in an armoury of scientific proofs of such persuasive force that they seemed to many to demand fealty. The "crisis of faith" in anything beyond that definition was intensified by the degree to which that faith was based upon literal biblical interpretation, which was the degree to which it found itself in confrontation with the direction of scientific thought. In the case of Scotland, we have seen the extreme example of this. Victorian England was visited by a similar, though less absolute crisis. It was enhanced by the considerable presence of the type of literal belief I have indicated, and conversely by the widespread acceptance of the undeniability of the materialist claims. This did not however result in the dichotomy which the Scottish case presents.

By contrast, Victorian England and her writers were largely engaged in the effort of achieving a compromise. However, a crisis did exist in that these efforts were hampered and rendered torturous by the acceptance of scientific progress, and therefore of the fact that the survival of a spiritual dimension was dependent upon its compliance with the dictates of scientific progress.

In some respects this was a more intense visitation of the atmosphere that had pervaded Europe in the Age of Enlightenment, and there is likewise a similarity in the way in which it was dispersed. The post-Romantic poets of Victorian England did not willingly champion the materialism with which their age abounded. Nevertheless, the strength and self-confidence of the scientifically based, materialist world in which they lived was such as to insist that their search for a framework beyond its terms should comply with its terms. This spiritually stultifying proviso would only be dispersed, as it was dispersed for the men of the eighteenth century, by the gradual realization that the inherent progress promised by a scientifically based cosmology was an illusion, that a world thus governed was at best trivial, and at worst, since it contained no moral principle, catastrophic.

This has been the basic problem facing the writer in the modern world. For many, a simple faith was no longer tenable, although as I sought to show in examining the medieval period, for many it never had been. Nonetheless, the confidence of modern materialism generalized the crisis. At the same time, however, it came increasingly to be realized that a submission to the dictates of materialism was itself inadequate. The acknowledgement of these factors, and the struggle to perceive once more a context in which man might reconcile the contradiction of his being, is above all what characterizes the/

the poetry of the modern age. The pre-requisite to this was the re-discovery of a definition of life, not in confrontation with materialism but beyond it and embracing it. This being so, it is perhaps not surprising that it found early and memorable expression in Russia, where late and headlong progress into the modern world co-existed with a lingering medievalism, and therefore with something far closer to a medieval vision of life than was to be found in the West.

Tolstoy's recognition of the inadequacy of the criteria of the modern world is voiced by Levin in Anna Karenin:

> Ever since, by his beloved brother's deathbed, Levin for the first time looked at the questions of life and death in the light of his new convictions, as he called them, which between the ages of twenty and thirty-four had imperceptibly replaced the beliefs of his childhood and youth, he had been stricken with horror, not so much at death, as at life, without the least conception of its origin, its purpose, its reason, its nature. The organism, its decay, the indestructability of matter, the law of the conservation of energy, evolution, were the terms that had superseded those of his early faith. These terms and the theories associated with them were very useful for intellectual purposes. But they gave no guidance for life, and Levin suddenly felt like a person who had exchanged his warm fur coat for a muslin garment, and out in the frost for the first time is immediately convinced, not by arguments but with his whole being that he is as good as naked and must inevitably perish miserably.[32]

It is interesting to note that the malaise described here does not relate primarily to death and what follows, but to the fact that the materialism which has displaced the old religious framework provides no sufficient theory of life, and that life itself is thus rendered meaningless. The perception of this inadequacy occurs within and concerns the temporal existence of man. Likewise the perception of a solution occurs within and concerns the temporal existence of man, although it also, crucially, goes beyond it. The materialism of the/

the age is such that to lose, like Levin, one's childhood faith is virtually inevitable. In the face of modern scientific and historical definition that faith flounders. But it flounders through a confusion of perspectives, by allowing its credence to be judged within a historical dimension. It can only be resurrected by the realization that religion's true dimension exists beyond historical time, and this can only be reconciled with historical time by the re-discovery of the fact that the eternal and the permanent is discernible within the realm of human history. In a world committed to time and change this may become obscured, but it can be renewed through the exercise of the perennial function of the creative imagination. In spite of the massive diversion which the modern world presents, the continuation in that function has been the essential feature distinguishing the major creative writers of our own age. In Tolstoy, Levin is led to this perception by the peasant Fiodr:

> 'Fiodr says that Kirilov lives for his belly. That is intelligible and rational. All of us as rational beings can't do anything else but live for our bellies. And all of a sudden this same Fiodr declares that it is wrong to live for one's belly; we must live for truth, for God, and a hint is enough to make me understand what he means! And I and millions of men, men who lived centuries ago and men living now - peasants, the poor in spirit and the sages, those who have thought and written about it, in their obscure words saying the same thing - we are all agreed on this one point: what it is we should live for and what is good. The only knowledge that I and all men possess that is firm, incontestable, and clear is here, and it cannot be explained by reason - this is knowledge outside the sphere of reason: it has no cause and can have no effects.
>
> 'If goodness has a cause, it is no longer goodness; if it has consequences - a reward - it is not goodness either. So goodness is outside the chain of cause and effect.
>
> 'It is just this we know, and that we all know.
>
> 'And I sought for miracles - complained that I did/

> did not see a miracle that would convince me.
> But here is a miracle, the one possible,
> everlasting miracle, surrounding me on all
> sides, and I never noticed it.[33]

What is perceived here is the selflessness which Christ established as the principle through which the world of time is reconciled with the eternal, a principle which exists undisturbed whatever the predelictions of that world.

In the face of the materialism of the age, however, this perception can only be achieved by great imaginative effort. The imagination has to forage ever further, not only to reach such truth but also to convey it. This situation, implicit in Coleridge's definition of the true imagination, as distinct from the fancy which reflects the age and which is therefore least penetrable when the spirit of the age is most powerful, helps to explain the forms which the modern period produced. The psychological intensity of Dostoyevsky, the rise of Symbolism, are instances of the heightened effort required to transform the temporal by revealing the permanent.

If the medievalism which lingered in the beliefs of the Russian peasantry contained a reconciliatory solution, which contrasts with the sterility which marked the Scottish kailyard, urban life, which was for Dostoyevsky as for James Thomson (BV) a place of dreadful night, nonetheless contained for the Russian, in its very darkness, the light by which man might comprehend redemption. Where a tradition of reconciliation had been eclipsed by nothing more powerful than the claims of materialism, then in the face of the failure of those claims, the re-discovery of a context in which existence was still allowed meaning remained possible. If one can maintain his recognition of evil - as opposed to a submission to "Necessity Supreme"[34] - he can maintain his perception of the good through which such a reconciliation is effected. In these circumstances, such/

such false alternatives as Maclaren's "Drumtochty" and Thomson's "City" present are transcended.[35]

Through their symbols the French poets of the late nineteenth century found a similar release from the tyranny of the material in the recognition of evil and of the positives that flow from that recognition. In this, both Rimbaud and Mallarme were deflected somewhat, although not fatally so, by the continuing tendency to over-estimate the poem's self-contained divinity, and the most enduring voice is that of Baudelaire, who remained relatively free from this error, and whose poetry is commensurately more convincing and its influence more profound. The nature of both testimony and influence are indicated below:

> In the middle nineteenth century, ... an age of bustle, programmes, platforms, scientific progress, humanitarianism, and revolutions which improved nothing, an age of progressive degradation, Baudelaire perceived that what really matters is Sin and redemption. ... The recognition of the reality of sin is a new life; and the possibility of damnation is so immense a relief in a world of electoral reforms, plebiscites, sex reform and dress reform, that damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation - of salvation from the ennui of modern life, because it at last gives some significance to living ... the sense of Evil implies the sense of Good.[36]

When the scientific promises of indefinite material progress were consumed in the funeral pyre of the Great War, it was to the Russian novelists, the French Symbolists, the Metaphysicals and, ultimately, to the great poets of the Middle Ages that the English-speaking writers turned in order that they might resurrect, not from, but from beyond the ashes, a vision of existence through which meaning could be restored. Succinctly, and with terrible power, Yeats stated in "The Second Coming" what the poet had long suspected and what the First World War had verified, that in human terms, scientific progress/

progress was no progress at all, and he went on to prophesy that it would lead, not to evolution, but to the diminution of man into something less than human, something bestial. Although it is invariably stated, it is nonetheless the case that our retrospective knowledge of later history would seem to confirm the prophesy:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
>
> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
> The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
> When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
> Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sand of the desert
> A shape with lion body and head of man,
> A gazè blank and pitiless as the sun,
> Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
> Reel shadows of indignant desert birds.
> The darkness drops again; but now I know
> That twenty centuries of stony sleep
> Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born.[37]

In the years after the War, it became increasingly clear that in his commitment to a theory of material progress justified by the truths of natural science, man was creating a hybrid, less than human, in that it had abandoned the spirituality which distinguishes man, and at the same time less than natural. The combination of "lion body and head of man" reduces knowledge of good and evil to an expediency which perverts both the man and the beast.[38]

However, if the myth of material progress was only recognized as folly through the terrible folly of the Great War, and if the lion-man that emerged from the myth was only defeated, for the time being, after even greater carnage, humanity has nonetheless survived so far. The poet, in seeking to maintain the vision of a context in/

in which that humanity might flourish, remains, despite his relative isolation in the modern world, a vital factor in that survival. In the wake of the Great War the English speaking poets abandoned all fealty to materialism, learning from those in Europe who had maintained a perception of this context, returning to the poetry of an age in which it had not yet been lost, and finding new impetus in the secrets which psycho-analysis, and in particular Jungian psycho-analysis, was revealing to the consciousness. For all the variety of interpretation that Jung's ideas admitted, they clearly had profound implications leading in the direction of a relationship between artistic symbol and something which, given the qualities of universality and permanence, we may call religious, in its distinction from anything contained in the definitions proposed by scientific materialism. In this widest sense at the very least, twentieth century poetry has maintained this crucial distinction.

Yeats himself fought his way to an apprehension of such a context. It finds testimony in the poem which contains his epitaph:

> Poet and sculptor, do the work
> Nor let the modish painter shirk
> What his great forefathers did,
> Bring the soul of man to God.[39]

Beyond the subjectivity of his method, and the arguments about the validity of his Vision, we may say of Yeats' achievement what has already been said in relation to the Romantic and post-Romantic poets, that the false vision atrophies, having no validity outwith the poet's ego, while the genuinely functioning poetic imagination achieves universality and permanence. It is obvious, the more so in that what is successfully and deeply communicated springs from such an amalgam of obscure sources, that a central body of Yeats' poetry falls into the latter category.

T S Eliot created what is of course the definitive expression of disillusionment with modern values and with the world that they had brought into being in The Waste Land. But as I have already noted, it is at the heart of the Waste Land that the Grail is to be found, in the perception of which lies the possibility of renewal and redemption. Eliot's ultimate testimony to this perception is found in the Four Quartets. There, while it is recognized that:

> ... to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint

yet there remains for those willing to perceive:

> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observence, discipline, thought and action.[40]

What is perceived is the existence in time of the permanent by which time is transformed; the "Incarnation"[41] which is the "Midwinter spring" in time through which we can envisage, and gain access to "the unimaginable Zero summer".[42]

The poet rightly denies all claim to sainthood. Yet the poetry testifies to the fact that the primary function of the poetic imagination is to apprehend what hints it can, while its secondary, and specific task, is to bring what is perceived into a relationship with the conscious world. I have sought to illustrate this essential poetic function throughout this study, and in the present section I have sought briefly to show that it remains central to the European tradition up to, and including our own age. Here again, at the heart of the work of the most influential figure in twentieth century English poetry, we find the perennial and inherent relationship between the struggle to apprehend the principle of reconciliation and the struggle with language, in order that this principle may be maintained within human consciousness:/

consciousness:

> ... And what there is to conquer
> By strength and submission, has already been discovered
> Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
> To emulate - but there is no competition -
> There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
> And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
> That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
> For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.[43]

It must of course be recognized that this central feature of the poetic imagination exists, increasingly as we approach the present, in contradiction of the dominant assumptions of society. This, at base, is the source of dwindling readership and poetic isolation. Should we therefore ruefully accept that imaginative literature, and all that I have said that the poetic imagination seeks to maintain, is all but extinct as far as any effect that it may have upon the life of man is concerned? To do so would be to contradict everything which this study has so far sought to establish, and to submit at this late stage to the idea that the poetic imagination is autonomous.[44] Far from this, I have defined the poet in the role of communicator, relating the spirit and the world. Not only does this imply that what he perceives is ultimately given, but it further implies that the ability to respond to his communication of that perception is likewise given to mankind at large.

In order to illustrate this, we might return, finally, to Anna Karenin, and to the thoughts that Tolstoy brings to life through the character of Levin. Levin, it will be recalled, found the permanent through which reconciliation could be achieved in the realization that "goodness" existed outwith that which could be conceived by the intellect alone:

> I was searching for an answer to my question, (as to the meaning of life). But reason could not give an answer to my question - reason is incommensurable with the problem. The answer has been given me by life/

> life itself, through my knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. And this knowledge I did not acquire in any way: it was given to me as it was given to everybody - given because I could not have got it from anywhere.[45]

I have already discussed Levin's personal redemption. But there is an immensely important corollary here in the fact that what is "given" is "given to everybody". Before this revelation Levin had been driven close to despair by the failure of reason to provide meaning: "realizing that for every man, himself too, there was nothing ahead but suffering, death, eternal oblivion, he had decided that to live under such conditions was impossible". After his redemptive experience, however, he recognizes that even then, when he had sought answers through reason and failed to find them, he had not in fact despaired, that he had indeed: "experienced many joys and been happy whenever he had not pondered on the meaning of life". Implicit in this, as Levin now realizes, is the secret not only of his personal redemption, but of the continuing process, obscured but not obliterated by the materialism of the age, through which is enacted the redemption of mankind:

> What did that show? It showed that he had been living rightly but thinking wrongly.
> He had been living (without being aware of it) on those spiritual truths that he had imbibed with his mother's milk, yet in thinking he had not only refused to acknowledge these truths, but he had studiously ignored them.[46]

The great hope contained here is that the perception of good and evil is not only given to all men, but that it continues to be given even when, as in our own age, the explicit values of society are of another order. If those explicit values were indeed the sole impulse governing human life, that life would be based entirely upon "the struggle for existence, and the law demanding that I should strangle all those who hinder the satisfaction of my desires". As Levin comes/

comes to realize, "that is the deduction of reason". Such is increasingly the practice implicit in the materialist theories of existence. Fortunately, they are a long way from being the only factors governing everyday "living". The continuance, largely unacknowledged, of values which are "given", and the qualifications which those values impose upon materialist definitions remains the source of all that the modern world has produced which is civilized and humane. The problem of our age has been man's readiness to attribute autonomy to these definitions.[47] In the face of this, the essential function of the creative imagination rests in the re-discovery and re-assertion of the fact that "loving one's neighbours reason could never discover, because it is unreasonable". The poet must forever bear witness to the permanent and universal source of that which is given to the heart of man. In so doing, he is relating that source to the conscious mind of man, at a time when the human consciousness was never more in need of such assistance.

The recurrent acceptance of such a role by the imaginative artist in post-Reformation Europe, bears witness to the survival of the core of that tradition which I have sought to illustrate with reference to the literature of pre-Reformation Scotland. I have therefore included this short chapter in order to indicate that the extent to which, consequent upon the peculiarities of the Scottish experience in the post-Reformation era, the modern Scottish consciousness has become detacheded from the one, is closely related to its detachment from the other.

Chapter IX:
Conclusion: Scotland in the Twentieth Century

It remains for me to say something of the developments that have taken place in Scottish life and literature in the twentieth century, and to consider how these developments relate to Scotland's past, as I have described it, as well as to what I have said concerning the general European situation. In the previous chapter I sought to show that despite the fact that, since the Renaissance, western man's consciousness of the inter-relationship of the spirit and the world has faded as a result of a constantly expanding definition of material existence, the creative imagination has consistently transcended the resultant divergence by resurrecting the principle through which the totality of human life can be reconciled. By contrast, throughout the preceding section of this study, I tried to show that the Scottish imagination in the same period was distinguished by its failure to do so. The basic reason for this, I have suggested, was that the principle of reconciliation was not simply smothered in the welter of material progress, but uniquely, and fundamentally denied by the dominant philosophical and psychological forces by which the Scottish consciousness was defined in the post-Reformation period. The dichotomy between world and spirit which this situation created itself intensified the dilemma caused by the continuing revolutions in man's material definition of existence, so that by the beginning of the present century, at which point our consideration of the Scottish situation was interrupted, that dichotomy could be symbolized, on the one hand by the retreat into religious and general sentimentality of the "Kailyarders" and on the other by the submission to materialism and to the despair that its implications provoked, of John Davidson and James Thomson (BV).

With the possibility of an inclusive solution erased from the Scottish consciousness, and given that the attitude of the "Kailyard" was imaginatively untenable, it was from the materialist universe of Thomson and Davidson that the twentieth century literary revival was to emerge.[1] In this, the peculiar history of the Scottish consciousness continued to determine the direction of the Scottish imagination, and to distinguish it from the essential spirit of the European literary tradition, as well as from that of the great expression of that tradition to be found in the literature of pre-Reformation Scotland.

I do not intend to give a writer by writer account of Scottish literature in the twentieth century.[2] Quite apart from the fact that space denies such an exercise, very probably more would be obscured than would be revealed. If, as I intend to show, the dominant mood of that literature is materialist, then, as well as those whose work expresses the essential nature and policies of such an attitude, there will be many whose concerns are of a secondary kind, and whose work, which may be of the highest merit in another context, is co-incidental to the central issues under discussion at the present time. The following account will therefore concentrate upon that which is relevant to those issues. They are, in any case, the central issues not only of the present study, but of any attempt to relate the Scottish character to its own past and to its place in a European tradition.

As I indicated in the preceding chapter, the Great War was the ultimate refutation of the assumption, which science fostered, of indefinite material progress. That assumption had created a wasteland, and in doing so, it renewed in the imagination the need to re-discover a definition of existence which was of permanent validity. In Scotland also, the war provoked a profound reaction. However, as I have said, the state of the Scottish consciousness was at variance with that of/

of the rest of Europe, essentially in that through the peculiarities of its history, that consciousness was foreign to the reconciliatory principle which, although partially obscured, perpetually renewed the imagination elsewhere. As I have further indicated, by the twentieth century the reality of this situation was that the Scot had little option other than the acceptance of the materialist definition.

Now if this circumstance brought dismay to Thomson and Davidson, what, one might ask, would be left to say by an imagination thus restricted, having witnessed the terrible refutation of the First World War? Yet as we know, the nineteen twenties witnessed the beginning of a major revival in Scottish letters. The answer is that in the presence of the peculiarities of the Scottish condition, the Scottish reaction against the assumptions which collapsed in chaos in 1914, itself took of necessity a peculiarly national, which in circumstances is to say materialist, form. Thus, in his introductory essay to The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology, Alexander Scott describes the effect of the war upon the Scottish poet who was personally responsible to an astonishing extent for the revival of Scottish literature in the twentieth century:

> When he began his literary career in the years immediately following the First World War - which, ostensibly fought on behalf of 'gallant little Serbia' and/or 'gallant little Belgium' had shocked him into concern with his own small country - the Scots tradition was in ruins after more than a century of slavish imitations of Burns by versifiers who were content to sketch only the surface mannerisms of the Scottish scene.[3]

The two basic points recognized by MacDiarmid and those who followed him were, that Scottish culture was in a state of poverty in that it failed completely to deal with the reality of the Scottish condition, and that this failure stemmed from historical factors which urgently needed examination and diagnosis. The two points came/

came together in that the poverty of Scottish literature was intrinsically linked to the historical factors, and so also, therefore, was its renewal. The quality and quantity of Scottish writing in the twentieth century, and the greater general cultural awareness which exists, more especially when we consider the late nineteenth century sterility from which it emerged, bears momentous witness to the achievement of MacDiarmid and of those who took up his cause.

It would however be idle to claim that the yearned for resurrection of the Scottish identity has taken place. This failure is, I would suggest, inevitable given the direction which the poets of the revival had no choice but to take. I have said that the response was basically twofold. Firstly, there was a reaction against a cultural stagnation, "content to sketch only the surface mannerisms of the Scottish scene", and secondly, against the historical conditions that had made for this stagnation. By the late nineteenth century, what remained of Scottish literature all but ignored the material reality of Scottish life. The response of the poet in the twentieth century has been to bring his poetry into contact with that reality, central to which was the political, linguistic, and general cultural disintegration which, for historical reasons, pre-eminently Scotland's subjection to a more powerful England, had taken place, and which had to be recognized and resisted. The immensity of such a programme, and the degree of success with which it was carried out, makes it difficult to speak of limitations. Nonetheless, a fundamental limitation was inherent in the late nineteenth century malady and was bequeathed to those who sought it to correct it. Indeed, ultimately, the situation was determined by the disjunction between world and spirit which began in the sixteenth century.

The Scottish poets came to a literature which was inadequate to/

to the material reality of modern existence. This was so in that a literature content with "surface mannerisms" was the only literature compatible with the fundamentalism which by this time had become the last refuge of Scottish spirituality. Given the dichotomy which marked the Scottish character, in the abandonment of this attitude the poets of the revival could do no other than to replace an isolated fundamentalism with an isolated materialism. However, as a result of the specifically Scottish sensibilities which the Great War renewed, the despair which had so often accompanied this procedure during the Victorian period, stemming from the conclusion that a man was adrift in a universe robbed of purpose, was avoided. Rather, materialism was given positive purpose in being wedded to the secular myth (and I use the term myth with no perjorative inference) of a resurrected sense of nationhood related, in some cases, to various forms of Socialism or Communism.[4]

Now certainly much good can spring from such myths. Indeed, in the present case, Scottish culture has been wakened from a sleep in which it might well have died. But such myths do not in themselves contain the moral principle by which we might reasonably assume that what will emerge on re-awakening will be a wiser and more humane society. Were nationality defined entirely by its material attributes, to be re-established tomorrow, we would then be returned immediately to the general quandaries facing modern man, which themselves stem from the inadequacy of a purely material definition of existence. The task of rousing the sleeper was immense. There are, however, contexts beyond those which inaugurated the process which must now be considered. They must be considered, in that the desired end of that process which MacDiarmid and others set in motion, which is the resurrection of the Scottish identity, is itself precluded by the material definition within/

within which the revival has by and large existed.

Throughout this study, through the medium of Scottish poetry in the Middle Ages, and of the European poetic tradition to the present day, I have illustrated that identity, in essence, is dependent upon the reconciliation of world and spirit. Both factors, spiritual intuition and material experience, exist within the single consciousness, and the effort to reconcile the two is the first principle on the road towards wholeness, individually, nationally, and universally. As this study has further shown, the Scottish consciousness has been uniquely marked by a dichotomy between world and spirit which is a fundamental denial of the principle through which a wholeness, individually, nationally and universally might be sought. The choice for the Scot has been between the opposites that compose this dichotomy, both inadequate in themselves, and coinciding only in the fact that both, being by definition in a state of perpetual opposition, respond to the suspicion of insufficiency by the adoption of that tone of self-sufficiency which has long been a feature of the Scottish character. Given that by the twentieth century the spiritual pole of this division was so weakened that it implied a literature which could be no more than the celebration of the superficial, it was to the world of isolated materialism that, with a voice thus confident, and at times strident, Scottish poetry turned in the nineteen twenties.

This is in no way to suggest that the movement which began at that time, containing as it did at least one poet of the highest order, was entirely devoid of spiritual content. Indeed, such would be a contradiction in terms. The poetry of MacDiarmid himself would refute this, and such content could likewise by found in the work of others who followed him.[5] The great early lyrics of the Sangshaw and Penny Wheep volumes are redolent with spiritual atmosphere, in fact I would suggest/

suggest it to be the core of their greatness.[6] It is likewise present in A Drunk Man looks at the Thistle, and it recurs in flashes in many of the later poems. In some respects indeed, it could be claimed that spiritual speculation is a feature of the poetry of the revival. It is however a pre-occupation of a specifically Scottish nature, which itself springs from the aforementioned dichotomy.

As I have already said, spiritual intuition co-exists in the consciousness with material experience. It is to be expected therefore that when the poet speaks we will somewhere recognize its presence. Where the tradition based upon the reconciliation of world and spirit lingers, the poet can approach the spiritual through that reconciliatory principle. Where, for example, the more symbolic forms of Christianity survive, the poet may re-discover in these symbols the means of relating spiritual intuition to the actuality of existence. Others have found similar possibilities elsewhere, for example, in Buddhism, in Hinduism, or in psycho-analysis. In Scotland, however, the concept of reconciliation has too long been foreign to the consciousness. God, and the spiritual universe in general have been for too long, as Edwin Muir put it, "three angry letters in a book"[7] to be "visualized", even symbolically, which is once more to say that a division exists between world and spirit in the Scottish consciousness. In such circumstances the spiritual intuition has nothing to relate to. It can inhabit the poem as an unconscious presence, as in MacDiarmid's lyrics, but the short lyric is itself an expression of the fact that it can go no further. The longer poem implies the need to relate such intuition to reality, and in the absence of the reconciliatory principle, this is precisely where the Scottish writer is restricted. What does mark the longer poems of the revival springs likewise from this peculiarly Scottish circumstance, and that is the aura of spirituality with which/

which the poet seeks to invest the secular myth.

I have already spoken of such efforts in a European context.[8] There I indicated that they must inevitably be thwarted by the inherent fallibility of the purely materialist solution. Certainly, the material reality of the Scottish condition presented the poet with problems which were eminently worthy of his efforts, problems centring on the great neglected question of the Scottish identity. For historical reasons which the poets of the revival illustrated, the narrowness of Calvinism, the influence of England, the cultural reflection of this identity had dwindled to the celebration of "surface mannerisms", and in renewing the culture, they sought to renew the character. The need, encapsulated in MacDiarmid's famous phrase, "not Burns - Dunbar"[9] was to look for inspiration to that period when identity and culture existed in the fullest sense. In response to this, the revival has been greatly concerned with the re-emergence of the idea of Scotland in political and in linguistic terms, and in relation to this, with the effort to re-establish Scotland's place in a European cultural tradition such as that which it held in its medieval past.

The importance of this campaign cannot be over-emphasized. Certainly without it I could not indulge in the present exercise. Neither do I wish to detract from the importance of these matters which the revival has emphasised. However, I have been prompted to engage in the present study by the belief that the essence of the desired identity - as illustrated in the European tradition, and in the medieval Scottish expression of that tradition - is contained in the principle of reconciliation between world and spirit, that the loss of identity is ultimately the loss of this principle, and that as a result of this loss, the materialist framework which confines the efforts of the revival, renders those efforts incommensurable with the desired end.

I do not mean to deny the reality of the exceptional degree to which, since the late Middle Ages, the material features of the Scottish identity have been undermined, nor the importance of the re-assertion of these features. But even granted the total success of that re-assertion, the result would not be synonymous with the resurrection of identity. For the Scot especially, but for western man in general, that resurrection is dependent on the re-discovery of the principle upon which the European tradition rests. Thus, for the Scot especially, in his divergence from that tradition, in the psychological division which distinguished him from it, and in the isolated materialism which in the modern age has been the result, that re-discovery is obscured.

In spite of this, however, the need to relate life to a context which will lend it purpose continues, and as I have said, this is seen in the attribution of spiritual authority to material concepts. As well as his assertion of Scottish nationhood, MacDiarmid has his Hymns to Lenin, a common enough commitment in the thirties, but one which, continuing through the fifties is indicative of exceptional needs in the absence of a transcendent solution. Then again, uniquely, and indeed heroically in such circumstances, there is the scientific poetry which occupied him increasingly from the thirties until his death. The qualification which must be made of such efforts, however, is that as they are based upon wholly materialistic assumptions, there is no guarantee that the direction in which they will take us is forward, and a great many precedents suggest the contrary.

Dr Edwin Morgan opens his essay on MacDiarmid's "Poetry of Knowledge" by claiming for it an authority based upon the following extract from Wordsworth's "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads":[10]

> If the labours of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready/

> ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or the Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relation under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings.

The conditions in which the twentieth century revival of Scottish letters was born dictated that it would have its existence within a materialist definition. In his "poetry of knowledge" MacDiarmid sought to establish a positive relationship between man and the universe at what is, in material terms, the most fundamental level, founded on an evolutionary past:

> I must begin with these stones as they world began.[11]

and dedicated to an evolutionary future, which not only accepts that:

> - Even our deepest emotions
> Maybe conditioned by traces
> Of a derivative of phenanthrene.[12]

but exults in the knowledge.

That MacDiarmid's response to the Scottish condition should be nothing less than the attempt to formulate an inclusive materialist credo is, as I have said, heroic:

> The appeal to the future, either as a period when better poetry of the same kind will be written or as a period more likely to understand the value of the first stumbling efforts is sometimes made in these poems of MacDiarmid's, and although it is not in itself the strongest of arguments it is an essential part of the evolutionary credo implicit in the poetry.[13]

The problem with such a poetry, is in that subjecting human spirituality to an "evolutionary credo" it commits itself entirely to moral neutrality. As I have said earlier,[14] this is in effect to/

to replace the knowledge of good and evil with expedience, and a humanity governed only by expedience can do no other than to become less rather than more human, in that it has sloughed off the essential attribute of its humanity. I do not suggest for one moment that MacDiarmid, or for that matter, Edwin Morgan, intend this. On the contrary, they see salvation in the "credo" in that they have endowed it with the deflected spirituality of the Scot which, as a result of the dichotomy that he has inherited, is turned back upon a material context. In other words, as modern man he continues to live one way but, and in the case of the Scot, for reasons far deeper than those endured by his contemporaries, he thinks another.[15] In the field of poetry, however, such an attitude separates the tone of the Scottish revival from that of a European tradition which has continued to maintain the thought of the world in a relationship with that which is given by the spirit through the medium of the imagination.

A poetry that declares an evolutionary credo is not embracing material science but subjecting itself to material science, and is diametrically opposed to the universe inhabited by that tradition, not excluding William Wordsworth, with whom, as we have seen Dr Morgan claim a parallel. To attempt such a parallel is to fundamentally distort Wordsworth's hierarchy of values, as the lines which surround his extract from the "Preface" clearly indicate. For example:

> Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, 'that he looks before and after'. He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love.

Such is the relationship that Wordsworth envisages between poetry and science. The increasing importance of science demands that it be embraced by the poetic imagination, whose function in any case is/

is to relate the spirit to the world in which science has its being. But all is in the relationship. Poetry "looks before and after" the affairs of the temporal world, and maintains the permanent which, through "relationship and love" it perceives, in order to reconcile it with that world. This is the enduring vision which Wordsworth holds in common with all else which is universal and permanent in the European poetic tradition, and it is in total contrast with the "revolutionary credo" which MacDiarmid in his later poetry expounds.

This contrast is put plainly from the viewpoint of one in sympathy with MacDiarmid's commitment by Dr Morgan:

> He (MacDiarmid) has never believed that art can be relegated from the general evolutionary stream (full of hopeful mutations and choppy setbacks as it is) to a backwater however warm and consulatory, of 'permanent' human feelings.[16]

Now this statement not only defines the attitude of MacDiarmid, it also indicates the sympathies of Dr Morgan, and, I believe, the bequest that for the most part has been accepted by those of the present generation who continue the effort to revive the Scottish culture.[17] But representing as it does a fundamental contrast to the spirit that informs the poetry of Europe and of medieval Scotland, it can only be understood in the light of the unique history of the Scottish consciousness which, in this study I have sought to chronicle. I have undertaken the study in response to the fact that this history, arriving as it does at such a statement, presents an inbuilt barrier to the desired renewal of Scotland's relationship with Europe, and with her own medieval past.

Such a barrier is contained in the dismissal of the 'permanent', and it can only be understood if we recall the sterility at which spirituality, the upholder of the permanent, had, in its Scottish/

Scottish manifestation, arrived in the modern age. Therefore, this dismissal, and the consequent commitment to a materialist definition, are rendered explicable by the Scottish context in which they occur. But the inadequacy of such a commitment is inherent in the "hopeful mutations and choppy setbacks" which is the amoral, and therefore fundamentally inhuman reality of the "evolutionary stream". In this it runs contrary to the re-discovery of identity, as the essence of human identity lies in the inter-relationship of world and spirit of which it is a denial, and, as the perpetual resurrection of this inter-relationship has remained central to the European poetic tradition, it likewise runs contrary to any cultural re-unification with that tradition, including its medieval Scottish manifestation.

To say this is to indicate, not a philosophical disagreement, in which both parties can comprehend the alternative view, but rather a state of, as I have termed it, incommensurability. It recurred throughout the early chapters of this study where we saw a basic absence of sympathy with the vision of the medieval poet on the part of the critic who considered that his subject could be contained in the summation of pertinent material factors. It is likewise expressed by the fact that the inevitable converse of Dr Morgan's sympathy for MacDiarmid's attitude, a sympathy that is widespread, is his dismissal of the poetry of Edwin Muir on the assumption that it is based upon an "underlying evasion and escape".[18] A knowledge of Muir's poetry, his prose, and in fact his life itself, makes it difficult to understand this criticism but for the presence of a basic incommensurability. By its presence, the central concerns of the imagination of an entire poetic tradition are abandoned.

It might be said that the spirituality which pervades Muir's/

Muir's work presents a serious challenge to what I have suggested to be the condition of modern Scotland. This is not in fact the case. Vital to such content, as Muir's own writings attest, is his Orcadian background, and the same presence in the work of the younger Orkney poet, George Mackay Brown, further verifies the point. The essence of this birthright lay in the fact that in Orkney, there was "no great distinction between the ordinary and the fabulous".[19] In effect, by virtue of its isolation, Orkney was by and large exempt from the major manifestations of material progress in recent centuries, and while a reformed religion without symbol or ceremony was the established form of worship, yet the relationship between world and spirit was not entirely lost to a lifestyle by which, as in the world of the Ballads, "the lives of living men turned into legends".[20] It is as a result of these conditions that both Muir and Brown provide a major exception in modern Scottish poetry, in that their background was a major exception to modern Scottish life. The outcome is a poetry which is concerned above all else with the relationship between the "story" of life in the material world and the permanent and universal context of the "fable". Muir's comprehension of the vital importance of this relationship to the perception of the meaning of existence was hard won in the face of the continuing crisis in which the various materialist definitions maintained the western world, a world in which he travelled far and on which he pondered long. First and foremost, however, he was prompted by the results of the total absence of any such comprehension in a Scotland subject to those conditions which, in the present study, I have sought to analyse.

As a result of those conditions the Scot, trapped within his materialist assumptions, accords to any spiritual concern the/

the attributes of spirituality as he has known it, an absolute adherence to archaic beliefs incompatible with the realities of life. As a result, while in world terms Muir is granted a respect that is still growing, in Scotland, where general apprehension of the import of his poetry is most pointedly lacking, he is more often than not accorded the position of the interesting curio, a truer appreciation of his vision being persistently thwarted by the misplaced charge of escapism.

The timeless world of his Orkney childhood afforded Muir a perception of the unfallen state of Eden. Leaving Orkney, he experienced the horror of the modern world, initially in the slums of Glasgow, later throughout a strife-torn Europe in which he was an exceptionally close observer of the tragedies of the twentieth century. Ultimately, however, he was able by virtue of his experience of an unfallen state, to find meaning in the otherwise meaningless human condition through the recognition of the fall, and of the fact that a knowledge of good and evil lies beyond the expedience which rules the "evolutionary stream".

Now it is in the misapprehension of the relationship between the perception of Eden and of a fallen world that the charge of escapism is based, and this misapprehension springs from a dichotomy between world and spirit which is quite foreign to the vision of existence which Muir actually held. By the terms of that dichotomy, the material reality is the fallen world, an Orkney childhood is the lost Eden, and to concern oneself with the latter is to reject the former and is therefore an "evasion and escape". In the precedent of the "Kailyarders", we are reminded of the train of events which would bring the modern Scot to such a judgement, but in the infinite distance/

distance which separates Muir from the "Kailyarders", we are again reminded of the barrier which obscures from both sides of the divided Scottish consciousness the principle of reconciliation of which Muir's poetry is a further declaration. The division itself is the barrier. Where it assumes a confrontation between irreconcilable opposites, Muir's actual vision springs from a tradition based upon the inter-relationship of the story and the fable.[21] His perception of Eden is not a rejection of the story, but a guarantor of this inter-relationship in the fallen world. This established, he seeks in his poetry to reconcile the two, and he succeeds, through the perennial means, in the recognition of virtues in the fallen world which the innocence of Eden could never have known, reflections of the eternal through which that fallen world is redeemed and reconciled. That such is the true framework of Muir's poetry is made abundantly clear in his Autobiography, in a series of outstanding critical essays, and of course in the poetry itself:

> One foot in Eden still, I stand
> And look across the other land.
> The world's great day is growing late,
> Yet strange these fields that we have planted
> So long with crops of love and hate.
> Time's handiwork by time is haunted,
> And nothing now can separate
> The corn and tares compactly grown.
> The armorial weed in stillness bound
> About the stalk; these are our own.
> Evil and good stand thick around
> In the fields of charity and sin
> Where we shall lead our harvest in.
>
> Yet still from Eden springs the root
> As clean as on the starting day.
> Time takes the foliage and the fruit
> And burns the archetypal leaf
> To shapes of terror and of grief
> Scattered along the winter way.
> But famished field and blackened tree
> Bear flowers in Eden never known.
> Blossoms of grief and charity
> Bloom in these darkened fields alone.
> What/

What had Eden ever to say
Of hope and faith and pity and love
Until was buried all its day
And memory found its treasure trove?
Strange blessings never in Paradise
Fall from these beclouded skies.[22]

In its apprehension of such a framework, Muir's poetry is at heart an attempt towards that reconciliation of world and spirit which has ever been central to the poetic imagination, but which has been absent from Scottish life and literature since the close of the Middle Ages. It is as a result of this situation that his work is so often misinterpreted by his Scottish contemporaries. In his apprehension therefore of this timeless reconciliation, Muir's is a personal poetic triumph, and one moreover which he successfully conveys to an ever increasing and appreciative readership. But the continuing incommensurability between the vision which his poetry embodies and the reaction which considers it an "evasion and escape" is indicative of the barrier against reconciliation which still pertains to the Scottish consciousness. The conditions which facilitated Muir's perception, and also that of George Mackay Brown, are also the conditions which essentially distinguish their experience from those of their contemporaries who exist within the psychological mainstream of Scottish life.[23] In other words the perception of the fall, and of redemption, becomes far more of a possibility where there has been an initial experience of Eden. Of course the child emerges as innocent in central Scotland as he does in Orkney. But the reality of an isolated materialism is a denial of that innocence, and it is a reality moreover which evolved in reaction against a religious definition which condemned human existence to a state of unrelieved perdition.

The problem of materialism is common to the entire western world, and it remains the essential task of the imaginative artist to redeem material existence by reconciling it with the permanent and universal values of the spirit. The antithetical condition by which that materialism stands in total opposition to the spirit is a specifically Scottish phenomenon deriving from the emnity which the course of Scottish psychological history has set between the two. This dichotomy continues to militate against such a reconciliation both in literature and in life.

In the course of this study I have sought to illustrate that this principle lies at the heart of the achievement of the medieval Scottish poets, and that it continues to form the essence of the enduring literature of Europe. This remains the permanent and universal heritage to be assimilated from both. In recognizing it we are re-united with both, and simultaneously receive the corner-stone upon which identity, individual, national and universal must be built. How this is to be brought about in a nation in which the entire principle was rendered alien long ago, is beyond the wisdom of this study. One could hope to see the infusion of Muir's spiritual consciousness into the reality of Scottish life as MacDiarmid, those who accompanied him, and those who have come after him, have revealed it. Such a reconciliation would be apt. However, in Scotland, for reasons which this study has sought to delineate, the very concept of such a reconciliation remains to be re-discovered.

In the post-medieval period, the Scottish consciousness was returned to that state of incommensurability between world and spirit to which Orpheus was subject, and by which Cresseid was condemned.[24] The latter day expression of Cresseid's rebellion against the gods/

gods lies in the commitment of the modern Scot to a material definition. While on the surface this emphasis is held in common with the rest of the western world, the incommensurability from which its Scottish expression springs, indicates the unique profundity of the barrier which exists against the resolution of the inadequacy of this definition. The essential step towards the dissolution of that barrier lies in the renewed perception of what Henryson, and through him Cresseid perceived, which is that the incommensurability that afflicts us is cancelled, and our reconciliation with the universal and the permanent is effected, by the presence of virtues which, in being themselves universal and permanent we call graces, in the midst of the temporal and material world. This done, the moral fable of existence might be comprehended.

To this end I submit the tentative outline of a history of the Scottish imagination which is this study. In doing so, I recognize that it will not meet with general agreement. Indeed, quite apart from the many errors of judgement which I do not doubt I have made, the situation which I have outlined would itself preclude any such reception. In defence, I would plead that such an approach makes for a better understanding of the literature of our medieval past than any other, and that it is likewise necessary to our appreciation of much that is central to the European poetic tradition. On this I would seek to justify the conclusions and speculations which I have made upon the contrasts which the post-medieval life and literature of Scotland present, in the belief that it renders the questions raised worthy of our consideration.

NOTES

Chapter I:
The Moral Universe in non-Christian and in Christian Terms

[1] Edwin Muir, "Franz Kafka," Kafka: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Ronald Gray, (New Jersey, 1962), pp. 24-44.

[2] Charles Elliott, ed., Robert Henryson: Poems, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1974). All quotations in this chapter are from this edition.

[3] John MacQueen, Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems, (Oxford, 1967), pp. 24-44, explains the sources and functions of allegory in Orpheus and Eurydice at length.

[4] MacQueen, p. 40. See Also John MacQueen, "Neoplatonism and Orphism in fifteenth century Scotland: The Evidence of Henryson's New Orpheus," Scottish Studies, XX(1977), pp. 69-89.

[5] Testament of Cresseid, 217-38.

[6] MacQueen, "Henryson's New Orpheus," in exploring the fullness of the poem's philosophical content, is at once a testimony to its stylistic accomplishment.

[7] Elliott, 130-33.

[8] Edward C. Schweitzer, "The Allegory of Robert Henryson's 'The Bludy Serk'," Studies in Scottish Literature XV (1980), pp. 165-74, (hereafter SISL) and G.S. Peek, "Robert Henryson's View of Original Sin in 'The Bludy Serk'," SISL, X (1972-73), pp. 199-206, provide interesting and divergent interpretations of the poem. In their different ways, however, both recognize in it a transformation of the relationship between the human and the divine.

[9] Schweitzer makes this point.

[10] I.W.A. Jamieson, "The Minor Poems of Robert Henryson," SISL, IX (1971-72), pp. 125-47. I should note here also that an important contribution to the study of Henryson's sources is I.W.A. Jamieson, "The Poetry of Robert Henryson: a study in the use of source material," Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh 1964.

[11] Schweitzer, p. 171.

[12] "The Bludy Serk" generally receives scant treatment in surveys of Henryson's poetry. For example, in an article dedicated to the shorter poems, A.M. Kinghorn, "The Minor Poems of Robert Henryson," SISL, III (1965-66), p. 32, calls it "a poetical exercise written to illustrate a religious truth."

[13] Elliott, pp. 127-29.

[14] Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature, (Edinburgh, 1958).

[15] Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature, (London, 1977).

[16] T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," pt V, Four Quartets, The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, (London, 1969), pp. 189-90.

[17] Fresco in the Convent of S. Marco, Florence.

[18] Alterpiece in the Church of S. Lorenzo, Florence.

[19] Edwin Muir, "Robert Henryson," Essays on Literature and Society," rev. ed., (London, 1965), pp. 10-21.

[20] John Stephens, "Devotion and Wit in Henryson's 'The Annunciation'," English Studies, LI (1970), pp. 323-31.

[21] Charles A. Hallet, "Theme and Structure of Henryson's 'The Annunciation'," SISL, X (1972-73), pp. 165-74. Among other things in what is a very interesting article (but for a tendency to confuse Incarnation with Immaculate Conception, pp. 166-67.), Hallet speaks of the synthesis of time past, time present and time future.

[22] Respectively: Exodus iii. 2.
Numbers xvii. 8.
Judges vi. 36-40.

[23] Kinghorn, "The Minor Poems," p. 36.

[24] See for example "The Annunciation," Edwin Muir: Collected Poems, (London, 1960), pp. 223-24. Also, Muir's account of the effect which the visual representation of the Annunciation had upon him during his stay in Italy in An Autobiography rev. ed., (1954; rpt. London, 1968), pp. 277-79.

[25] Elliott, pp. 90-107. Important studies of the Testament are: MacQueen, pp. 45-93; E.M.W. Tillyard, in Poetry and its Background, (London, 1955) - originally published under the title Five Poems 1470-1870, (London, 1948); Denton Fox, introduction to his edition of the Testament of Cresseid, (London and Edinburgh, 1968).

[26] MacQueen, p. 46.

[27] Ibid. pp. 61-2.

[28] MacQueen, pp. 65-81, provides a detailed analysis of the allegorical significance of the Parliament and its members.

[29] The studies of the Testament which I have indicated, all recognize a degree of Christian morality in the poem. However, there is also a significant body of opinion which believes that the world of the poem is governed throughout by arbitrary and unjust powers. The most interesting expression of this attitude is that of A.C. Spearing, "Conciseness and the Testament of Cresseid," Chapter 6 of his Criticism and Medieval Poetry, (London, 1964), also, Tatyana Moran, "The Testament of Cresseid and The Book of Troylus," Litera, VI (1959), pp. 18-24.
Yet another view is that the poem has nothing to do with Christian morality, just or otherwise, and is entirely pagan. Of this see L.N. Dolores, "The Testament of Cresseid: Are Christian Interpretations Valid?," SISL IX (1971-72), pp. 16-25. (Continued .....)

As I have suggested in the text, the pessimism which Spearing recognizes is present throughout Orpheus and Eurydice. However, Cresseid reaches a parallel conclusion with fully a third of the poem remaining. As the final section climaxes in a fundamental transformation of the heroine, this surely indicates the introduction of a presence which supersedes the spirit governing Orpheus and Eurydice and the earlier part of the Testament. Of Dolores, see note 31 below.

[30] Certainly the pre-Christian context of the poem denies any such direct treatment, of which see John McNamara, "Divine Justice in the Testament of Cresseid," SISL, XI (1973-74), pp. 99-107. However, this in no way detracts from Henryson's achievement.

[31] The introduction of this reconciliatory element renders the (Christian) morality of the closing section different in kind from that which had hitherto applied. It does not contradict what precedes it, but it supersedes it, or, as with the Old Testament, it completes it. The failure to recognize this difference in kind is, I would suggest, the source of the divergence of critical opinion. For example the pessimistic view stems from the assumption that if Cresseid does finally reconcile herself to her fate, she is reconciled merely to the judgement of the Parliament, whose regime remains oppressive.
Reacting against such a conclusion, Dolores cites the line:

> O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troilus
> (546 passim)

as proof of the fact that Cresseid does not in fact repent, on the grounds that her original relationship with Troilus was itself contrary to the Judaic austerity of the Parliament. As McNamara has pointed out, for medieval man, Christian morality does not contradict pagan morality, (far less Judaic morality). Nevertheless, the reconciliatory element is the essence of the Christian message and it quite obviously qualifies both profoundly. (In dealing with this qualification, it is interesting to speculate how far the pagan world provided the poet with a less torturous contrast than would a Mosaic law which of course remained within the dogma of the Church.) In any case, the line quoted above is not essentially a submission to the judgement of the Parliament, though it may include that, nor is it the rejection of that law as Dolores suggests. Essentially, it is the recognition of the constant love which is the reconciliatory principle upon which the New Testament, and therefore the conclusion of the Testament is based. It is through this that the contradiction of human existence, which was the contradiction in Orpheus and Eurydice and in the earlier part of the Testament was resolved. The failure to take this into account maintains the contradiction, which will tend to confound criticism.

[32] John viii. 3-11.

[33] Some critics, Dolores for example, see these lines as being essentially a general condemnation of female inconstancy. While this is understandable, when the lines are placed in context it is difficult to believe that such is their central function. (Continued .....)

The lines occur in the last of five stanzas which embody Cresseid's response to Troilus's act of charity. In other words they are part of the climax of the poem when, through the recognition of truth, Cresseid's vision of existence is totally transformed. As the closing stanza of this response, it is wholly in keeping that it should contain the universalization of that which Cresseid has recognized personally in the preceding stanzas. However, the essence of that perception is not her own falseness, nor the falseness of her sex, but its obverse, "treuth". This I suggest is clearly indicated by the diction. The observation that inconstancy is rife is preceded by "becaus". The following lines lead to a response to this problem which is the climax of the stanza and indeed of the whole poem:

> Quha findis treuth lat him that lady ruse!
> (573)

[34] Edwin Muir, "One Foot in Eden," Collected Poems, (London, 1960) p. 227.

[35] For example, H. Harvey Wood in the introduction to his edition, The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, 2nd ed., (London, 1958), notes that the lament of Orpheus:

> "Quhar art thou gane, my luf Erudices?"
> (143 passim)

"strikes a note of real feeling in the heart of that rather frigid poem." This is quite true, but the point is that it is entirely appropriate. The human feeling of the lament is itself a response to the hopelessness of the human predicament in the face of the relentless morality which the poem's "frigidity" very successfully conveys.

[36] John i. 14.

[37] Troilus and Criseyde, V 1646-66.

[38] T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," pt V, Four Quartets, The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, (London, 1969), p. 190.

[39] MacQueen, pp. 50-54, in speaking of the setting in which the poem opens, notes that for medieval man the term 'lent', as well as its religious significance, was directly associated with spring and renewal. I do not think that this need interfere with the religious points that I have made. Indeed, there is ultimately no reason why the two meanings should not coincide.

[40] Ibid.

Chapter II:
The Moral Fables: Theory put into Practice

[1] In considering the Moral Fables, I have taken the ten fable Bannatyne MS (1568) as a basis. MacQueen, Appendix I, provides evidence of the greater authenticity of this version of the poems over the Bassandyne text (1571) favoured by H. Harvey Wood, and again by Charles Elliott. Given the nature of the present study, this divergence becomes crucial, and this will become clear as I indicate what I would suggest to be alterations in Bassandyne as we come to them. For the remaining three fables I will return to Elliot, and for the sake of consistency, I have maintained Elliot's line references throughout as well as his orthography.

[2] MacQueen's is the best full interpretation of the Fables. Among the shorter studies, that of Denton Fox, "Henryson's Fables," ELH XXIX (1962), pp. 337-56, is important. Also, though in the context of the present study I may question the overall adequacy of his approach, M.W. Stearns, Robert Henryson, (New York, 1949), remains an interesting interpretation in social and poltical terms.

[3] Matthew xiii. 3-23.

[4] A major precedent for this conception is of course the fourteenth century Piers Plowman.

[5] For example, H. Harvey Wood, "The Scottish Chaucerians," (London, 1967), p. 17, is grateful for the fact that Henryson "has the good sense to relegate the "moralitas" to a postscript where it can be taken or left alone."

[6] "The break in each poem between the fable proper and the "moralitas" is of course a reflection of the gap between the actual and the ideal. But this gap is more apparent than real, since the "moralitas" and the fable are intertwined in innumerable ways. And though the "moralitas" is necessary to complete the fable, its abstractions do not supersede or cancel the tangible world of the animals. We are left, at the end, with a single whole: the fable and the "moralitas" the visible world and its significance, have become one." Fox, "Henryson's Fables" p. 356.

[7] While The Cok and the Jewel does not in fact come first in Bannatyne, yet it seems clear that the prologue to the "taill" is also intended as a more general prologue, which in turn suggests that Henryson intended the fable to come first. The matter is considered by MacQueen, Appendix I.

[8] Stearns, pp. 108-9.

[9] Matthew iv. 4.
Luke iv. 4.

[10] Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature, (Edinburgh and London, 1958), p. 40, could serve as a further example.

[11] Elliott edition, introduction. p. xiii.

[12] As humour is the most immediately arresting feature of the Fables, and as the poems in the present section are rich in such humour, they tend to be favoured for discussion in most general surveys. This being so see James Kinsley, "The Medieval Makars," Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey, ed. Kinsley, (Edinburgh, 1955), Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature, (London, 1977); Wittig, op. cit.

[13] Stearns, p. 109.

[14] Kinsley, p. 18.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Donald MacDonald, "Narrative Art in Henryson's Fables," SISL, III (1965-66), pp. 101-13, provides an interesting study of Henryson's comic technique in relation to this poem, through a comparison with Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale.

[17] Neither of these fables are included in Bannatyne. I therefore refer directly to Bassandyne.

[18] The allusion to the crown is further indicated by the line:

> 'Schir,' said the foxe, 'yet knaw my roib is reid'
> (1976)

If this were to be taken further, one would assume that the human characters are the 'commonweal' and the wolf the avaricious nobility. The lesson that this would seem to hold for the king, especially in The Foxe that begylit the Wolf, is that there be no quibble over his demands for:

> ..... sex or sevin
> Richt off the fattest hennis off all the floik:
> (2326-27)

if he would curb the ambitions of the wolves. However, such speculation should not be taken too far, particularly where it obscures the higher values of the "moralitates".

[19] The most cogent expression of this view is given by J.B. Friedman, "Henryson, The Friars, and the Confessio Reynard," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, (1967), pp. 550-61.

[20] I do not disagree with the point that a criticism of the Friars is intended, but rather with the fact that is the central point. The essential question remains as to whether or not the confession is valid. Both for the reasons forwarded by MacQueen, 147-8, and that which I have indicated in the text, I conclude that it is.

[21] The term "without contrition" (Bannatyne), is replaced in the Bassandyne text by "without provision." The pre-Reformation implications of the earlier version are clearly the reasons for its displacement. The reason why it was considered necessary to make such changes, is precisely the reason why it is important to reinstate the original, or at least a version that is surely closer to the/

the original. In the context of the present study these divergences are vital. The major examples of such alterations invariably involve the removal of references to the concept of reconciliation, which I would suggest to be the essence of the pre-Reformation vision of life. Conversely, the loss of this concept is the essential factor governing Scottish life and literature in the post-Reformation era. Such changes are therefore a fundamental distortion in that they rob the pre-Reformation poet of the foundation upon which his framework is built. This is fully discussed in section (d) of the present chapter.

[22] Harold E. Toliver, "Robert Henryson: From Moralitas to Irony," English Studies, XLVI (1965), pp. 300-9, discusses this point in relation to The Cock and the Fox, The Fox the Wolf and the Cadgear and The Fox the Wolf and the Husbandman.

[23] Just as Toliver examines Henryson's exploitation of the disjunction between the illusions of the "taill" and the reality of the "moralitas" for comic purposes, so I.W.A. Jamieson, "Henryson's Taill of the Wolf and the Wedder," SISL, VI (1968-69), pp. 248-57., illustrates the means through which a forceful social criticism can be elicited from the same disjunction. What such studies show, is that a factor that other critics have considered a weakness is in fact a strength which the medieval vision provided, and which Henryson exploited superbly. It is through the failure to recognize the concept of reconciliation at the heart of that vision, that critics such as Stearns and Wittig have difficulty in seeing the Fables as a whole. In its absence, the disjunction between "taill" and "moralitas" becomes absolute, and a contradiction is assumed which prevents an inclusive reading. Henryson himself, on the other hand, assumes the possibility of reconciliation. Not only is this the ultimate reason for the Moral Fables, but in the fact that it renders the disjunction between "taill" and "moralitas" redeemable, the disjunction itself provides a circumstance which the poet can exploit to a positive end.

[24] Stearns, pp. 20-23, considers the poem in this light to the exclusion of all else. Jamieson on the other hand doubts the validity of the parallel.

[25] Bassandyne is the text used for this fable.

[26] Bassandyne has:

> The meir is men of gude conditioun,
> As pilgrymes walkand in this wildernes,
> Approvand that for richt religioun,
> Thair God onlie to pleis in everilk place;
> Abstractit from this warldis wretchidnes,
> Fechtand with lust, presumptioun and pryde,
> And fra this warld in mynde ar mortyfyde.

In other words, the mediatory factors of contemplation, penance and wilful poverty are dismissed.

[27] This is the original version in Bannatyne. In keeping with the changing times, however, he himself changed it to:

> O lord eternal, medeator for us most meke,
> Sit doun before they fader celestiall.

In Bassandyne the lines become:

> O Mediatour mercifull and meik,
> Thow soveraigne Lord and King celestiall.

[28] The composition of the animal parliament draws parallels with various features of Scottish heraldry, making clear the intended comparison with the state of government in Scotland. See MacQueen, pp. 149-53.

[29] Of the social references in this poem, see Nicolai von Kreisler, "Henryson's Visonary Fable: Tradition and Craftsmanship in The Lyoun and the Mous," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, XV (1973), pp. 387-403. Conversely, R.J. Lyall, "Politics and Poetry in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Scotland," Scottish Literary Journal, III no. 2 (1976), pp. 5-29, maintains that Henryson is "arguing from the most general terms." p. 9. It will already be clear that I believe any interpretation of the Fables which relies wholly upon material associations to be fundamentally inadequate. However, it seems difficult to escape the fact that the universal lesson supplied in The Lyoun and the Mous, is coincidentally extremely pertinent to Scottish conditions at the time, and this may have, as von Kreisler suggests, encouraged the adoption of the dream-vision, which at once supplies a degree of impersonal authority and personal anonymity. These material particulars are in no way incompatible with the values of the "moralitas" (its the assumption that they are that causes the problems). On the other hand Lyall's dismissal of such particulars is made not so much to assert the universal context as to question the validity of the parallels with the reign of James III. While I would certainly wish to avoid any over-emphasis of the parallel, it seems futile to deny it any existence. Of course the lesson of the fable is first and foremost a general one. But when Henryson writes on the subject of kingship, it is hard to imagine that the character of the reigning monarch would not cross the minds of his contemporary readers, especially when the situation faced by the Lyoun was so clearly relevant to the conditions which marked that reign.

[30] See MacQueen, pp. 170-73.

[31] In this wider context, Henryson's reference to the actuality of the Scottish situation are perhaps best thought of in relation to the general intrusion of the Crown upon existing institutions, and in particular the Church. Of this, see chapter IV pp. 121 ff. In this context, the actual behaviour of the King of Scots as reflected in the "taill" is clearly at odds with the values of the "moralitas", presenting as it does an example of God-given authority being used to thwart the will of God.

[32] I have already cited sufficient examples of this. It could be summed up by Kinsley, p. 18, where he says of Henryson that "his success lies not so much in his moral applications which are often too ingenious for modern taste."

[33] Matthew xxv. 31-46.

[34] Testament of Cresseid, 414-51.

[35] See for example, Wittig, pp. 50-1. Such an attitude in fact implies rejection of the jasp.

[36] Psalms xliv. 24. Such statements are recurrent throughout the Psalms, always accompanied by the assumption that God will wake.

[37] John i. 29-36.

[38] Matthew xxv. 31-46.

[39] For example, Stearns notes the accuracy of the description of flax growing in The Preiching of the Swallow. This, and a mention of the warmth with which the mouse is portrayed in the opening stanzas of The Paddok and the Mous, is typical of the treatment which both of these fables receive. Stearns also draws a parallel between the relationship of the paddok and the mous and that of King James III and his brother, Albany. While such points are of course of interest, they take little account of the instruction:

> This hald in mynde: rycht more I sall the tell.
> (2934)

[40] MacQueen, pp. 100-31; Fox, "Henryson's Fables," J.A. Burrow, "Henryson: The Preiching of the Swallow," Essays in Criticism, XXV (1975), pp. 25-39. Fox treats this fable in relation to The Cok and the Jasp. Though I used the latter to provide an initial framework, it does belong most properly within this group of fables.

[41] Unless otherwise stated, all the following quotations are from Matthew P. McDiarmid, "Robert Henryson in his Poems," Bards and Makars, ed. Adam J. Aitken, Matthew P. McDiarmid and Derick S. Thomson, (Glasgow, 1977), pp. 27-40.

[42] A similar response to that of Mr McDiarmid is that of Daniel Murtaugh, "Henryson's Animals," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, XIV (1972), pp. 405-21, suggesting that the "moralitas" leaves out "just how dark the workings of Providence must seem to us here below" in what is "Henryson's grim vision of sublunary existence." Again, such pessimistic readings spring from a false assumption as the the morality on which the Fables (and the climax of the Testament) is based. That is to say, they assume that the only possible 'resolution' lies in our submission to the inscrutable laws of Providence, or Fortune, or the planetary court, and that pessimism is therefore in order. In fact, the redemptive Christian morality which informs Henryson's poetry, is redemptive of precisely this situation, and the very source of optimism.

[43] Edwin Muir, "Robert Henryson," Essays on Literature and Society, rev. ed. (London, 1965), pp. 10-21.

[44] Ibid.

[45] As well as MacQueen, Appendix I, see John MacQueen, "Two Versions of Henryson's Fables," Innes Review, XIV (1963), pp. 3-9.

[46] Elliot, p. 89.

[47] G. Gregory Smith, ed., The Poems of Robert Henryson, Scottish Text Society (hereafter S.T.S.), 3 vols, (Edinburgh, 1906-14), vol II p. 283.

[48] MacQueen, 110-21.

[49] For example, Hugh MacDiarmid, ed., Henryson Selected by Hugh MacDiarmid, (Suffolk, 1973), states the following in his introduction:

> When the contemporary Scottish Renaissance Movement was launched in the twenties of this century it was immediately realized that to get Scottish poetry out of the doldrums into which it had fallen after the death of Burns and to restore it to a level worthy of the international prestige it had enjoyed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the work of such great makars as Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, Sir David Lyndsay, and Gavin Douglas, it was necessary for the work of these men to be much better known and for the slough of despond into which our once great tradition had fallen - an apparently bottomless abyss of doggerel, moralistic rubbish, mawkish sentimentality and witless jocosity - to be once again transcended.

Chapter III:
Fifteenth Century Poetry

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[1] Walter W. Skeat, ed., Bruce, S.T.S., 3 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1894).

[2] Matthew P. McDiarmid, ed., "Hary's Wallace," S.T.S., 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1968).

[3] Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature, (Edinburgh, 1958), pp. 13-14.

[4] Ibid, p. 18.

[5] In that such claims are by definition exclusive, while the essence of the pre-Reformation vision is its inclusiveness.

[6] Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature, (London, 1977), p. 7.

[7] Ibid, p. 22.

[8] "Hary's Wallace," notes. II. p. 280.

[9] Matthew P. McDiarmid, ed., The Kingis Quair of James Stewart, (London, 1973).

[10] See Chapter II, p. 81.

[11] Ibid, pp. 76-77.

[12] By contrast, see John MacQueen, "Tradition and the Interpretation of the Kingis Quair," Review of English Studies, NS XII (1961), pp. 117-31.

[13] Buke of the Howlat, The Asloan Manuscript, ed. W.A. Craigie, S.T.S., 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1925), II. pp. 95-126.

[14] A Diebler, Holland's Buke of the Howlate, (Chemnitz, 1892), pp. 12-14.

[15] Matthew P. McDiarmid, "Richard Holland's Buke of the Howlat," Medium Aevum, XXXVIII (1969), pp. 277-90.

[16] F.J. Amours, Scottish Alliterative poems in Riming Stanzas, (Edinburgh, 1892; 1897), 1st ed. pp. 47-81., 2nd ed. pp. xx-xxxiv.

[17] McDiarmid, p. 277.

[18] Ibid, p. 278.

[19] Another variation of this approach is Marion Stewart, "Holland's Howlat and the Fall of the Livingstons," Innes Review, XXVI (1975), pp. 67-79.

[20] See chapter II, pp. 58-60.

[21] Fables, "Prologue," 14.

[22] T.D. Robb, ed., (from the Asloan and Charteris Texts), The Thre Prestis of Peblis, S.T.S., (Edinburgh and London, 1920).

[23] A.C. Cawley, ed., Everyman and medieval miracle plays, rpt. (London, 1967).

[24] Robin Fulton, "The Thre Prestis of Peblis," SISL, XI (1973-74), pp. 23-46, illustrates the precise workings of this inter-relationship between the three tales, in what is a valuable examination of the poem.

[25] Ian Jamieson, "Fifteenth Century Attitudes of Poetry," SISL, XV (1980), pp. 28-42, considers that "the tale is, wittingly or unwittingly on the priests' part, in direct contradiction to their situation." While a certain mild satire may accompany the description of the clerical feast, it is difficult to believe that any fundamental contradiction is involved. Were this the case, the nature of the tales which the priests tell, and in particular the final tale, would be wholly incongruous. By the morality of the age that produced the poem, world and spirit did not necessarily exist in contradiction, and to assume that they do, is to impose the morality of a later age. If by that later morality the priests' celebration is contrary to spiritual values, then we may assume that a poem describing their feast would be likewise condemnatory. As the poem exists as it does, however, we may assume that it does not spring from such a morality, and that rather, its characters exist within the ebb and flow of the world and the spirit. Within that ebb and flow, it is impossible to see any implied criticism of the priests as anything other than mild.

Chapter IV:
Douglas, Dunbar and the Sixteenth Century

[1] Priscilla J. Bawcutt, ed., The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas, S.T.S., (Edinburgh and London, 1967), pp. 1-133.

[2] C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama, (Oxford, 1954), p. 78.

[3] Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature, (London, 1977) pp. 58-60.

[4] Bawcutt includes King Hart in her edition of The Shorter Poems, pp. 139-70, though she has serious doubts as to authorship, pp. lxxii-lxxviii.

[5] Priscilla J. Bawcutt, Gavin Douglas, (Edinburgh, 1976), p. 50.

[6] Ibid, p. 52.

[7] David F.C. Coldwell, ed., Selections from Gavin Douglas, (Oxford, 1964), notes, p. 141.

[8] Lewis, p. 83.

[9] Achitophel was the treacherous counsellor of David who deserted him for Absalom. Sinon was the Greek who persuaded the Trojans to accept the Wooden Horse.

[10] Bawcutt, Gavin Douglas, pp. 61-2.

[11] Ibid.

[12] For example The Paddok and the Mous and The Kingis Quair, chapters II and III respectively.

[13] Orpheus and Eurydice, 67.

[14] David F.C. Coldwell, ed., Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse by Gavin Douglas, S.T.S., 4 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1957-64).

[15] Lewis, pp. 83-7.

[16] Coldwell, introduction to Selection, p. viii.

[17] John Speirs, The Scots Tradition in Literature, rev. ed. (London, 1962), pp. 167-8.

[18] Ibid, p. 169.

[19] Edwin Muir, "The Poetic Imagination," Essays on Literature and Society, rev. ed. (London, 1965), pp. 215-27.

[20] Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh 1958), p. 82.

[21] Quotes taken from James Kinsley, ed., The Poems of William Dunbar, (Oxford, 1979).

[22] Tom Scott, Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems, (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 340.

[23] T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," pt V Four Quartets.

[24] Lewis, p. 95.

[25] Kinsley, nos 5 and 6.

[26] Scott, pp. 292-93.

[27] Simply titled "To the King," in Kinsley, no 44.

[28] John and Winifred MacQueen, ed., A Choice of Scottish Verse 1470-1570, (London, 1972), Introduction, pp. 13-17.

[29] See "The Antechrist" and "Ane Ballat of the Fenyeit Freir of Tungland," 53 and 54 in Kinsley. See also Bryan S. Hay, "William Dunbar's Flying Abbot: Apocalypse made to Order," SISL, XI (1973-74), pp. 217-25.

[30] MacQueen, Choice of Scottish Verse, p. 25.

[31] "In any case, the increase of monarchic organization and strength which is manifest in the sixteenth century, had begun everywhere long before the Reformation. Before ever Protestant doctrine justified princely control of the Church, the princes of Europe had been expanding their hold over their clergy, either in opposition to or in agreement with the popes. Luther's schism was not the first; its peculiarity lay in its being a permanent schism based on religious differences. In 1512 Louis XII of France threatened to take the French Church into schism, and as late as 1548 Rome dreaded a similar move from, of all people, Charles V; the Augsburg Interim appeared to be the first step in such a disaster. The schism of Henry VIII was at first presented as free of doctrinal quarrels with tradition, and that king was always advising Francis I to follow suit. It is clear that these rulers did not need Protestantism to teach them about sovereignty. National Churches existed in a measure, before the Reformation and continued to exist after it even in countries which remained Roman Catholic. In this political sense the Reformation exploited and up to a point consolidated a situation into which it was born." G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517-1559, (London and Glasgow, 1963), pp. 299-300.

[32] For example, Wittig, p. 102.

[33] As in the criticism of the Friars in The Fox and the Wolf, or of the ecclesiastic court in The Scheip and the Doig, both in chapter II.

[34] Douglas Hamer, ed., The Works of Sir David Lindsay, S.T.S. 4 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1931-36). See also James Kinsley, ed., Ane Satyre of the Thre Estaits, (1954) and The Historie of Squyer Meldrum, (1959).

[35] See Hamer, IV notes II p. 128.

[36] See John MacQueen, ed., Ballattis of Luve, (Edinburgh, 1970); R.D.S. Jack, ed., A Choice of Scottish Verse 1560-1660, (Edinburgh 1978); James Cranstoun, ed., The Poems of Alexander Montgomerie, S.T.S., 3 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1885-87), plus a Supplementary Volume, George Stevenson, ed., (Edinburgh and London, 1910); James Cranstoun, ed., Poems of Alexander Scott, S.T.S., (Edinburgh and London, 1896).

[37] Edwin Muir, Scott and Scotland, (London, 1936), p. 60.

[38] On the contrary, as MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, Introduction, pp. xxxv-lxviii, points out, the stages of Scott's own career, from love poetry, to psalms, to silence, are themselves an expression of the failure of such continuity.

Chapter V:
The Seventeenth Century - Elements of Decline

[1] This is discussed at length in chapter VIII.

[2] Edwin Muir, "Scotland 1941," Collected Poems, (London, 1960), p. 97.

[3] G.G. Coulton, Art and the Reformation, (Oxford, 1928).

[4] M.P. Ramsay, Calvin and Art, (Edinburgh, 1938).

[5] See chapter IV, note 31.

[6] I fully acknowledge, of course, such facts as English anti-popery, and the contrasting persecution of the Huguenots in France. These events were however very much linked to the establishment of the chosen state religion. On the level which matters with regard to the poetic imagination, there remained much common ground.

[7] See the three Spalding Club volumes, Musa Latina Aberdonensis, (Aberdeen, 1892, 1895, 1910).

[8] Robert H. MacDonald, ed., William Drummond of Hawthornden: Poems and Prose, (Edinburgh and London, 1976).

[9] MacDonald, p. xix.

[10] MacDonald, p. 11.

[11] On the theme of poetic and linguistic retreat, it should be noted that the continuation of this process is indicated by the fact that from the time of Drummond's death to the emergence of Robert Fergusson, the best poetry that Scotland produced was written in Gaelic. This is a further linguistic parallel to the geographical retreat of those adhering to a framework centred upon the House of Stewart.

[12] The disaster of Flodden, a battle which partly at least took place in response to the "Auld Alliance," left an enduring question-mark as to the advantages that the arrangement afforded Scotland. While the marriage of the young Mary to the Dauphin in 1558 seemed to assert the alliance more than ever, it simultaneously presented the prospect not only of alliance, but of incorporation by a Catholic power. In this light, the Protestant cause could be presented as the cause of national liberty (laying aside complicity with the aims of the English).

> "... already there were those in Scotland who had begun to question the trend of affairs. What would be the position of Scotland when Francis became King of France? Would not Mary remain in France as Queen of France? Would she not govern her kingdom of Scotland from France? Was that perhaps the reason for the continued maintenance of French soldiers on Scottish soil? And for those who had embraced the reformed religion - would not France, true to the Church of Rome, at once determine their destruction? (Continued ....)

> Thus, when the Reformers, calling themselves the 'Army of the Congregation of Christ Jesus', finally took up arms to defend their cause, they were able to make Protestantism a national movement against French imperialism."
>
> William Croft Dickinson, Scotland from Earliest Times to 1603, (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 320-21.

[13] The complexity of the relationship between Presbyterianism and Episcopalianism was of course great in itself, and rendered more so by the equally complex religious situation in England, as well as by the constantly shifting relationship between the two nations between the Reformation period and the Treaty of Union of 1707. For the Scottish Presbyterian, the Episcopal affinities with Anglicanism, and by implication, anglification, are, if not a constant question, certainly a recurrent one. It is treated as such by William Ferguson, Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707, (Edinburgh, 1977), within the relevant chapters.

Also indicated, and of interest with regard to the present chapter, is the fact that the Reformation in Scotland had its direction set to a considerable extent by the fact of the absence of a 'godly prince' on the English model. p. 76. passim.

[14] The Calvinist tendencies of the Scottish Reformation were of course emerging even before the Union of Crowns. However, I am speaking here of the conditions which facilitated the abnormal success of Calvinism in Scotland. Certainly, there was also a strong Episcopalian voice in the country, while conversely, there were Huguenots in France and a multitude of sects in England. But in the present discussion, I am concerned with the dominant strains which ultimately characterized the Reformation in the various countries.

[15] A succinct expression of this process, and of its implications, is Edwin Muir's "The Incarnate One," Collected Poems, pp. 228-29.

[16] See chapter II section (d). The spiritual as well as the material interpretations placed upon pre-Reformation poetry by modern critics bear witness to the continuing effects of the dichotomy which in fact came into being in the post-Reformation period. This being so, it is a foreign imposition upon pre-Reformation poetry.

[17] These matters are discussed again in chapters VI and VII following.

[18] See chapter VI.

Chapter VI:
The Eighteenth Century Enlightenment

[1] A. Burns Jamieson, Burns and Religion, (Cambridge, 1931), pp. 26-7.

[2] G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517-1559, (London and Glasgow 1963), p. 278.

[3] James Sambrook, ed., The Seasons and the Castle of Indolence, (Oxford, 1973).

[4] Mary Jane Scott, "James Thomson, Anglo-Scot: a reconsideration of his work in relation to the Scottish background," Ph.D. thesis, (Edinburgh, 1979).

[5] As I have said, the southward trend took place in terms of attitude as well as physically. The scientific and philosophical greatness of eighteenth century Edinburgh reflected this anglification more than poetry, which in Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns took the opposite direction. The nature of these opposite reactions is the central theme of David Daiches' The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth Century Experience, (Oxford, 1964).

[6] Alexander M. Kinghorn and Alexander Law, eds., The Works of Allan Ramsay, S.T.S., 6 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1974).

[7] Watson's work contains such diverse pieces as The Cherrie and the Slae, "Christis Kirk on the Green," Sempill's "Habbie Simson," and Hamilton of Gilbertfield's "Last Dying Words of Bonnie Heck." Harriet Harvey Wood, ed., S.T.S., vol I, (Edinburgh and London, 1977).

[8] Otherwise, the most common survivors of the seventeenth century were the works of Sir David Lyndsay, Barbour's Bruce and Blind Hary's Wallace.

[9] The Tea-Table Miscellany, 4 vols, (1724, 1725, 1727 and 1732).

[10] Obviously, the 'Epistle' is a form in which both Fergusson and Burns excelled. "The Twa Books," looks forward to Fergusson's "Mutual Complaint of Plainstanes and Causey," and in a way to "The Ghaists, a Kirkyard Ecologue." Likewise, to Burns' "The Twa Dogs."

[11] I choose an extract from "Lucky Spence's Last Advice," in that it shows Ramsay's imaginative adaptation of the mock-testament form made popular by Watson's publication of "Bonnie Heck."

[12] Of this see Matthew P. McDiarmid, ed., The Poems of Robert Fergusson, S.T.S., 2 vol (Edinburgh and London, 1954), I pp. 118-37, "The Nature of the Inheritance."

[13] The form goes back to the Troubadours. In Scotland it was used on occasion by Alexander Scott, for example, MacQueen, Ballattis of Luve, no. XXX.

[14] See H.M. Shire, "The Cherrie and the Slae," Song Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland under King James VI. (Cambridge, 1969), chapter V, and also, "The Oppositione of Court to Conscience: 'Court and Conscience walis not weill'," SISL, III (1965-66), pp. 144-150.

[15] Edwin Muir's assessment of the linguistic situation in Scott and Scotland, (London, 1936), and the reaction that it provoked is indicative of the centrality of the language question to the policy of the literary revival movement of the twentieth century.

[16] For example, see chapter II note 49.

[17] Thomas Crawford, Burns: S Study of the Poems and Songs, (Edinburgh and London, 1960), p. 34.

[18] Ibid, pp. 25-48.

[19] Matthew P. McDiarmid, The Poems of Robert Fergusson, S.T.S., 2 vols, (Edinburgh and London, 1954).

[20] Both Heriot and Watson left endowments for the provision of education and a degree of medical care for the sons of the poorer Edinburgh merchants. Essentially, the Mortmain Bill proposed that the trustees of these funds should invest them in government securities. Not only was the three per cent interest rate low, but clearly the priorities of government and charities were liable to differ, while ultimately, to the Scottish patriot, the proposal represented the diversion of Scottish funds to London interests. In fact, the measure was rejected.

[21] Biographical material on the life of Fergusson continued from the time of his death and throughout the nineteenth century. Of these see the Bibliography. Also, S.G. Smith, ed., Robert Fergusson 1750-1774, (Edinburgh, 1952); A.H. MacLaine, Robert Fergusson, (New York, 1965), and "Robert Fergusson's Auld Reekie and the Poetry of City Life," SISL, I (1963-64), pp. 99-110.

[22] I refer to the incident recorded by David Irving, Life of Robert Fergusson, (Glasgow, 1799). Fergusson met his friend Woods, the actor, after a period of time during which he had cut himself off from his former acquaintances, and in great agitation declared that he had "just discovered one of the miscreants who had crucified our Saviour." In his state of religious melancholy the fact that this referred to himself surely suggests itself.

[23] A. Burns Jamieson, Burns and Religion, (Cambridge, 1931), p. v.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid, p. 104.

[26] Thomas Carlyle, Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, vol I, Burns, (London Centenary Edition) p. 311.

[27] Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, (1869), Dover Wilson, ed., (Cambridge, 1971).

[28] Burns Jamieson, pp. xiv-xv.

[29] Christina Keith, The Russet Coat, (London, 1956), pp. 173-74.

[30] David Daiches, Robert Burns, (London, 1966), p. 11.

[31] James Kinsley, ed., The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, 3 vols, (Oxford, 1968).

[32] J. De Lancey Ferguson, ed., The Letters of Robert Burns, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1931). The phrase is used in Burns' letter to James Cavendish, 21 March, 1787, I p. 79.

[33] Thomas Crawford, Burns: A Study of the Poetry and the Songs, (Edinburgh and London, 1960), p. 16.

[34] Matthew Arnold, "Spinoza and the Bible," Essays in Criticism (1867).

[35] Burns Jamieson, pp. 35-7.

[36] From a letter to Mrs Dunlop, 13 December, 1789, Letters I p. 374.

[37] Crawford, p. 16.

[38] Keith, p. 45.

[39] One Janet Horne, of the parish of Loth in Sutherland. Executed at Dornoch.

[40] It is interesting to note that the theory of universal restoration by a general rehabilitation of the damned, including Satan, was postulated by Origen, 185?-254?, and only rejected by a council at Constantinople in 553. However, whatever the source of Origen's opinions, their re-reference in post-Calvinist Scotland was supported by nothing more than the optimism of the age. With regard to my suggestion that the absolutism of Calvinism itself dictated this inversion, the following observation upon the doctrine of predestination may be illuminating:

> "We may add that this dreadful doctrine, after provoking quarrels of unheard of violence among the Calvinist churches, especially in Holland, ended by being rejected as immoral nearly a century ago, and it seems clearly to have been given up by everyone in the Protestant sects, whose tendency is rather to deny the eternity of the pains of Hell and to revert to that universal restoration of which Origen spoke in the third century."
>
> Leon Christiana, Heresies and Heretics, (London, 1959), tr. Roderick Bright.

[41] This is not to question the integrity of the Reformers, but rather to examine unforeseen psychological consequences attendant upon their dogmatic stance.

[42] Exodus xii. 1-30. The reference is of course to the initial Passover, when the first born of Egypt were slain, but the houses of the Israelites, their lintels smeared with the blood of the sacrificial lamb, passed over.

[43] Ultimately, as Crawford, p. 339, has pointed out, there are contradictions in the ideal that Burns seems to envisage, that of a soceity of free and equal, honest men. This is simply to say that secular solutions to the human condition are inherently imperfect. This fact is of great importance in the wider context of the present study and will be discussed in considering the modern age. However, it need not at present confuse the discussions of Burns and his poetry.

[44] Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism, (London, 1930), tr. Talcott Parsons.

[45] R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, (London, 1926).

[46] Elton, Reformation Europe, pp. 312-18.

[47] Religion figure especially in the correspondences with 'Clarinda," and with Mrs Dunlop. See De Lancey, Letters.

[48] The Parliament of fourfuttit Beistis, haldin be the Lyoun, 1111-12.

[49] Burns Jamieson, p. 114.

[50] G. Gregory Smith, Scottish Literature: Character and Influence, (London, 1919).

[51] Edwin Muir, Scott and Scotland, (London, 1936), pp. 112-14.

Chapter VII:
The Nineteenth Century Crisis

[1] Thomas Hutchinson, ed., rev. Ernest de Selincourt, Wordsworth: Poetical Works, (Oxford, 1969), p. 226.

[2] "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," Poetical Works, pp. 734-43.

[3] "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," Poetical Works, pp. 460-62.

[4] James Kinsley, ed., The Oxford Book of Ballads, (London, 1965).

[5] chapter VI, p. 203.

[6] James Hogg, The Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott, (1864), p. 61.

[7] David Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk, (London, 1972).

[8] Sir James Fergusson, "The Ballads," Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey, ed. James Kinsley, (London, 1955), pp. 99-118.

[9] David Daiches, "Eighteenth Century Vernacular Poetry," Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey, ed. Kinsley, pp. 150-84.

[10] Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature, (London, 1977), p. 145.

[11] John Speirs, "The Scottish Ballads," in his The Scots Literary Tradition, rev. ed. (London, 1962), would seem to pinpoint as being quintessential to the Ballads a similar "religious sense." p. 140. However, he also stresses "a fundamental difference between the Scottish Ballads and the Romantic Poetry of the nineteenth century" p. 138. Certainly, much Romantic Poetry simply adopted aspects of the Ballad style. This is what Mr Speirs is referring to, the use of "what may be described as the 'machinery' of the Ballads," and from this he concludes that "there is nothing in common between the vital, if very fragmentary, vision of the Scottish Ballads, and the insubstantial dream of nineteenth century poetry." While this holds true of some nineteenth century poetry, there is more to Romanticism than "insubstantial dream." Where there is, which is to say, where Romantic poetry is at its most enduring, the affinity with the vision of the Ballads is genuine, as, for example, in the instance cited in note 3 above.

[12] Madge Wildfire's song from The Heart of Midlothian.

[13] Douglas Gifford, ed., Scottish Short Stories 1800-1900, (London, 1971), makes a similar point in his Introduction, and also, from time to time in his James Hogg, (Edinburgh, 1976).

[14] "The Phrase is David Daiches' from his essay "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist," written in 1951, but now available along with other major essays in Walter Scott, 1968, Collected and edited by D.D. Devlin, (in the Macmillan "Modern Judgements" series)" - Gifford's note.

[15] Gifford, Scottish Short Stories, Introduction.

[16] Francis Russel Hart, The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey, (London, 1978), p. 21.

[17] John MacQueen, "Ringan Gilhaize and Particular Providence," John Galt 1779-1979, ed. Christopher A. Whatley, pp. 107-19, makes this point.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Douglas Young, "Scottish Poetry in the Late Nineteenth Century," Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey, ed. James Kinsley, (London, 1955), pp. 236-255.

[20] chapter VI, p. 202.

[21] Robert Nicoll, "My Hame," Whistle-Binkie, 2 vol, (Glasgow, 1878), II pp. 167-8.

[22] Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Mile and a Bittock," Collected Poems, ed. Janet Adam Smith, (London, 1951), p. 150-51.

[23] For example, Douglas Young, "Late Nineteenth Century Poetry," p. 253, Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature, p. 253.

[24] Charles Darwin, Origin of the Species, (1859). Of course the concept of evolution was spreading its influence long before this.

[25] A. MacLaggan, Whistle-Binkie, I p. 327.

[26] Lindsay, p. 291.

[27] See chapter VI, note 40.

[28] chapter V, pp, 146-9.

[29] Andrew Turnbull, ed., The Poems of John Davidson, 2 vol, (Edinburgh, 1973), II pp. 539-44. See also, J.B. Townsend, John Davidson: Poet of Armageddon, (Yale, 1961).

[30] Turnbull, II p. 427.

[31] Anne Ridler, ed., Poems and some letters of James Thomson, (London, 1963), p. 198.

[32] Ibid, p. 177.

[33] Lindsay, p. 305.

Chapter VIII:
European Comparisons

[1] G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517-1559, (London and Glasgow, 1963), pp. 285-86.

[2] chapter I, pp. 13-18.

[3] John MacQueen, ed., Ballattis of Luve, (Edinburgh, 1970), Introduction, p. xi.

[4] Ibid, p. lxviii. See also, chapter IV note 38.

[5] chapter V.

[6] Ibid, pp. 139-40.

[7] chapter III, pp. 92-5.

[8]

If this our life be but a single day
In Boundless Time, if the revolving year
Without recall pursues our days down here,
If all things born on earth must pass away,

My captive soul, what art thou dreaming then?
Why go'st thou in this dark life pleasuring,
If, to a bright, more glorious home, thy wing
Is now emplumed to fly past mortal ken?

There is the bliss all living souls desire,
There blessed rest to which we all aspire;
There love is; there too bides celestial mirth;

There, soul, enravisht to the highest skies,
The pure Idea at length thou'lt recognize
Of beauty that I worship here on earth.

Cassell's Anthology of French Poetry, (London, 1950), Conder, p. 82.

[9] Tasso struggled long with the task of rendering his major work acceptable within the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation, a factor which doubtless contributed to his mental instability.

"The Gerusalemme (Liberata) was completed in 1575, though neither (the Gerusalemme or the Aminta) appeared in print 'till five or six years later. In the interval Tasso was seized with scruples, fearing the censure of the Inquisition, adding an allegory, and embarking on the process which will lead him to the stillborn Gerusalemme Conquistata (1587-92) in which he set out to eliminate the elements which make the attraction of the earlier poem. ..... from 1577, the seeds of disorder had appeared in Tasso's mind, so that, from 1579-1586 he endured imprisonment in the hospital of St Anne."

J.H. Whitfield, A Short History of Italian Literature, (London, 1960), pp. 138-39.

[10] chapter IV, pp. 125-27.

[11] Edwin Muir, "The Politics of King Lear," Essays on Literature and Society, rev. ed. (London, 1965), pp. 31-48.

[12] The significance of the factors which Muir indicates here will be realized more fully when considered in relation to his assessment of modern society as in "Natural Man and Political Man," contained in the same collection.

[13] Paradise Lost, Book X.

[14] It is interesting to speculate how far this incommensurability is responsible for the factor which is always noted when Paradise Lost is discussed, namely, that Satan is the most attractive character in the poem. Given the divide which radical Protestantism sets between God and man, human existence is rendered innately evil. This brings humanity into a closer proximity to the Evil One, and the sympathy for the Devil which Paradise Lost evokes could be seen as the tragic obverse of the humanized Devil of Burns' "Address to the De'il," which is of course introduced by an extract from Milton's epic. See chapter VII, pp. 180-83.

[15] For example:

> "L'ésprit de ce souverain juge du monde n'est pas si indépendant qu'il ne soit sujet à être troublé par le premier tintamarre qui se fait autour de lui. Il ne faut pas le bruit du canon pour empêcher ses pensées; il ne faut que le bruit d'une girouette ou d'une poulie.
>
> Ne vouz étonnez pas s'il ne raisonne pas bien à présent; une mouche bourdonne à ses oreilles; c'en est assez pour le rendre incapable de bon conseil. Si vouz voulez qu'il puisse trouver la vérité, chassez cet animal qui tient sa raison en échec et trouble cette puissante intelligence qui gouverne les villes et les royaumes. Le plaisant dieu qui voilà! O ridicolosissimé heroé!"
>
> (The mind of this supreme judge of the world is not so independent as to be impervious to whatever din may be going on nearby. It does not take a cannon's roar to arrest his thoughts; the noise of a weathercock or a pulley will do. Do not be surprised if his reasoning is not too sound at the moment, there is a fly buzzing round his ear; that is enough to render him incapable of giving good advice. If you want him to be able to find the truth, drive away the creature that is paralyzing his reason and disturbing the mighty intelligence that rules over cities and kingdoms.
>
> What an absurd god he is! Most ridiculous hero!)
>
> Pensees, (London, 1966) tr. A.J. Krailsheimer, p. 43.

[16] chapter I, pp. 6-11.

[17] As in Orpheus and Eurydice and the Testament, Venus, in Racinian drama is the same dissimulating power that virtually ensures human incommensurability with divine law. For example:

> O toi, qui vois la honte où je suis descendue,
> Implacable Vénus, suis-je assez confondue!
> Tue ne saurais plus loin pousser ta cruauté.
> Ton triomphe est parfait; tous tes traits on porté.
>
> (O thou who seest, the shame to which I've come,
> Venus implacable, am I confounded
> Enough for thee? Thou canst not further urge
> Thy cruelty; thy victory is complete.)
> (Phèdre III. 2.)

[18] For example:

> Le cruel Dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi.
> Je te plains de tomber dans ses main redoutables,
> Ma fille.
>
> (The cruel God of the Jews will soon prevail
> Over you also, and I mourn that you
> Are falling into His relentless hands,
> My child.)
> (Athalie II. 5.)

[19] The impossibility of reconciliation and the resultant defiance is contained in the following:

> Dans le temple des Juifs un instinct M'a poussée,
> Et d'apaiser leur Dieu j'ai conçu la pensée;
> J'ai cru que des présents culmeraint son courroux,
> Que ce Dieu, quel qu'il soit, en deviendrait plus doux.
> Pontife de Baal, excusez ma faibless.
> J'entre; le peuple fuit, le sacrifice cesse,
> Le grand-prêtre vers moi s'avance avec fureur.
>
> (Urged by a sudden impulse to this temple
> I came instead, thus hoping to appease
> The Jewish God, and calm his wrath with gifts.
> I though that God, whoever he may be,
> Might become merciful. Pontiff of Baal,
> Forgive this strange infirmity of purpose.
> I entered; the people fled; the sacrifice ceased.
> The High Priest came towards me white with fury.)
> (Athalie, II. 5.)

[20] For example, Discourse on Method, especially discourses 4 and 5, and Meditations.

[21] Rameau's Nephew and D'Alebert's Dream, (Suffolk, 1966), tr. Leonard Tancock.

[22] "Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau," from Blake's Notebook of poems written 1780's - 1810.

[23] See J.M. Cohen, A History of Western Literature, (London, 1956)

[24] Selected Poems, (London, 1954), tr. J.B. Leishman.

[25] Letter from Keats to George and Tom Keats 1817, Keats: Poems and Selected Letters, ed. Carlos Baker, (New York, 1962). pp. 407-9.

[26] Faust, tr. Bayard Taylor, introduction Victor Lange, (New York 1950), from "Prologue in Heaven."

[27] Ibid, V. 7.

[28] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, chapter XIII.

[29] In many respects, in his admiration of Pope for example, but ultimately in the defiance of damnation Byron has far less to do with this than the other major English Romantics. Perhaps this is not unconnected with the lingering presence of the Calvinist ghost by which he admitted to being haunted. See chapter VI, note 18.

[30] A Defence of Poetry (1840), part I.

[31] Eliot's most influential qualification of the Romantic attitude is perhaps contained in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," The Sacred Wood, (1920).

[32] Rosemary Edmonds, tr., Anna Karenin, (1954; rpt Suffolk, 1975), p. 820.

[33] Ibid, p. 830.

[34] chapter VII, p. 231.

[35] Drumtochty is the village in which Dr John Watson, "Ian Maclaren," set his "Kailyard" stories Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush, and The Days of Auld Langsyne.

[36] T.S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," first published as an introduction to The Intimate Journals of Charles Baudelaire, 1930.

[37] W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, (London, 1933), pp. 210-11.

[38] The most succinct and revealing account of such matters is Edwin Muir's "Natural Man and Political Man," Essays on Literature and Society, rev. ed., (London, 1965), pp. 151-65.

[39] W.B. Yeats, "Under Ben Bulben," Collected Poems, pp. 397-98.

[40] T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," pt V, Four Quartets, The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, (London, 1969), pp. 189-90.

[41] Ibid.

[42] "Little Gidding," pt I, Four Quartets, p. 191.

[43] "East Coker," pt V Four Quartets, p. 182.

[44] See pp. 256-7.

[45] Anna Karenin, p. 832.

[46] Ibid.

[47] There is perhaps an interesting point here with regard to the central concerns of this study. I have drawn a general distinction between the survival of a literary tradition in Europe, and its demise in Scotland. This I have related to the continuation in the former case, and the loss in the latter of a spiritual dimension. I would suggest a relationship between this and the almost religious idealism of European left-wing politics (the appeal of the extreme right is different in kind, as Fascism could never delude the man of good will without first eradicating that good will) in contrast to a British left, the foundations of which were to a large degree Scottish, whose approach was far more geared to the art of the possible. This is not to detract from the Clydesiders, whose success was a result of their practicality. Moreover, as I have indicated in this chapter, the misapplication of the spiritual dimension, which is to accord to the material the attributes of the permanent, must end, short of the total absorption of the knowledge of good and evil by the machinery of materialism, in disillusionment. In the field of politics, Scotland has escaped this fate. It is, however, a negative blessing, stemming from the fact that for the reasons I have indicated, there was little to misapply.

Chapter IX:
Conclusion: Scotland in the Twentieth Century

[1] "Davidson, in the work of his last decade, rejected the religious interpretation of life impressed upon him in childhood by his father, an evangelical minister, and expressed in his epics and tragic dramas a gospel proclaiming that the whole universe is explicable in terms of matter alone. Like his hero, MacDiarmid conceives much of his later work on an epic scale, banishes God from the universe, rejects most - if not all - mysticism, and bends his power towards what he calls 'a poetry of facts', the facts being of the kind that can be tested by the scientific intelligence." Alexander Scott, "MacDiarmid the Poet," introduction to The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology, ed. Michael Grieve and Alexander Scott, (London, 1972), pp. xxi-xxii.

[2] Anthologies: George Bruce, ed., The Scottish Literary Revival, (London, 1968); Norman MacCaig and Alexander Scott, ed., Contemporary Scottish Verse 1959-69, (London, 1970); Maurice Lindsay, ed., Modern Scottish Poetry: An Anthology of the Scottish Renaissance, rev. ed. (Manchester, 1976).
Surveys: James Kinsley, ed., Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey, (London, 1955); Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature, (Edinburgh, 1958); John Speirs, The Scots Literary Tradition, rev. ed. (London, 1962); Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature, (London, 1977). See also Douglas Young, Plastic Scots and the Scots Literary Tradition. (Glasgow, 1946).

[3] Alexander Scott, "MacDiarmid the Poet," p. xvii.

[4] In chapter VIII, note 47, I suggested a contrast between the near to spiritual idealism of European left-wing politics, and the more down to earth attitude in Britain at large and Scotland in particular. In his political idealism, MacDiarmid is a European. But while this is completely at one with the poet's own general attitude, it remains completely at odds with political attitudes in Scotland at large.

[5] Only with difficulty, however. Following MacDiarmid, the main efforts of the poets of the Renaissance have gone into a linguistic revival, together with a dedication to the intellectualization of content which at times seems to be somewhat mechanical in its results, as opposed to being the natural outcome of deeply apprehended truth. Despite his commitment to material solution, the poet who most consistently conveys a spiritual presence is perhaps Sorley MacLean. (See Spring tide and Neap tide: Selected Poems 1932-72). This suggests, in spite of MacLean's personal beliefs, and of the late,-but exceptionally influential arrival of fundamentalist religion, that Gaeldom, like Muir's Orkney, retains a wholeness of vision which has not survived in lowland Scotland. There by contrast, the somewhat mechanical intellectualization I have mentioned is perhaps an aspect of the isolated materialism which I have suggested has restricted the imagination in the mainstream of Scottish life.

[6] See Iain Crichton Smith, "The Golden Lyric," in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, ed. Duncan Glen, (Edinburgh and london, 1972), pp. 124-40.

[7] Edwin Muir, "The Incarnate One," Collected Poems, (London, 1960), p. 228.

[8] chapter VIII, p. 253.

[9] In Albyn: or Scotland and the Future, (London, 1927).

[10] Edwin Morgan, "Poetry and Knowledge in MacDiarmid's Later Work" first published in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Festschrift, ed. K Duval and S.G. Smith, (Edinburgh, 1962), later in Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, pp. 192-202.

[11] From "On a Raised Beach," The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. Michael Grieve and W.R. Aitken, (London, 1978), I pp. 422-33.

[12] From "Poetry and Science," Complete Poems, I pp. 630-31.

[13] Morgan, Critical Survey, pp. 193-94.

[14] chapter VIII, p. 264.

[15] chapter VIII, p. 267 ff.

[16] Edwin Morgan, Hugh MacDiarmid, British Council Writers and their Work series, (Edinburgh, 1976), p. 28.

[17] I do not refer to Dr Morgan, nor to any of the poets of his generation when I note that, among those who have in the last fifteen years or so taken up the cause of Scottish culture, there are those who see this as synonymous with the production of the kind of poetry MacDiarmid wanted in his later statements on the subject. I further note that a subsidiary of this process is a tendency towards intellectual arrogance and intolerance, unhealthy in any circumstances, but in this case, not even earned. It is unearned in that, while the utilization of a multitude of scientifically verifiable but obscure facts in his poetry was a conscious and valid experiment for MacDiarmid, the emulation of his method does not in itself endow the practitioner with intellect. More importantly, it is quite contrary to the emergency of the wisdom which eschews intellectual arrogance and intolerance. This too may be an aspect of the phenomenon of the Scottish psychological disjunction examined in this study. Trapped within the material, some such mechanical intellectualism may be seen as a substitute for a wisdom which is dependent upon the inter-relationship of world and spirit. It is precisely the situation from which Levin escapes in the extracts from Anna Karenin cited in chapter VIII.

[18] Edwin Morgan, "Edwin Muir," first published in The Review, (1963), later in Edwin Morgan: Essays, (Cheshire, 1974), pp. 186-93.

[19] Edwin Muir, An Autobiography, (1940; rpt London, 1976), p. 14.

[20] Ibid.

[21] The Story and the Fable, was of course the title of the original version of Muir's autobiography, and the inter-relationship of the two is the central reality in his work.

[22] "One Foot in Eden," Collected Poems, p. 227.

[23] Disagreement with this perception is of course perfectly valid, but as I have indicated, we are presented here, not with disagreement but incommensurability. Likewise, with regard to George Mackay Brown, see Robin Fulton, Contemporary Scottish Poetry, pp. 109-15.

[24] See chapter I.

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Manuscripts

The manuscripts relevant to the older poetry cited are as described in the introductions to the various editions employed. In the case of Robert Henryson, which is the only occasion on which I have introduced any divergence, the pertinent MSS. are the Gray MS., c. 1500, which is the source for "The Annunciation" and is now in the National Library of Scotland; the Asloan MS., c. 1500, which is the basis of Orpheus and Eurydice and is likewise in the National Library; the Bannatyne MS., (Edinburgh, 1568), which provides the source for "The Bludy Serk." The Testament of Cresseid is taken from the Charteris print, (Edinburgh, 1593), now to be found only in the British Museum.

As I have indicated, Charles Elliott, whose edition of Henryson I have used as a basis, follows H. Harvey Wood in favouring the Bassandyne print, (Edinburgh, 1571) - National Library of Scotland - as his source for the Moral Fables. However, for reasons which I have illustrated, I have preferred the aforementioned Bannatyne MS. - National Libary of Scotland - in the belief that the differences in Henryson's poetry which the Bassandyne print impose, are indicative of the values of a later period, and tend to obscure the reality of the poet's authentic vision. The Bannatyne MS. has been reproduced by the Scottish Text Society, ed. W. Tod Ritchie. 4 vols. Edinburgh and Lond, 1928-34.

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